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CHARACTERS,  
SCENES, AND INCIDENTS,  
OF THE  
REFORMATION;

FROM THE RISE OF THE CULDEES TO THE  
TIMES OF LUTHER.

LONDON:  
THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY;  
*instituted 1799.*

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# CHARACTERS, SCENES, & INCIDENTS

## OF THE

### REFORMATION.

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#### CHAPTER I.

Urgent necessity of a Reformation—Substitution of corrupt doctrines for those of the word of God—Pilgrimages—Relics—Extreme degeneracy of the priests and people—Depravity of the highest orders of the hierarchy—Instances of piety.

NEARLY two thousand years ago, an extraordinary character appeared in the wilderness of Judæa. As his people had made void the law of God by the traditions of the fathers, and had become exceedingly corrupt, he received a Divine commission to “prepare the way of the Lord.” Attired in raiment of camel’s hair, with a leather girdle about his loins, and feeding on locusts and wild honey, John the Baptist went forth, “in the spirit and power of Elias,” proclaiming repentance, as the

only way of restoration to the favour of God, and the consequent enjoyment of purity and peace.

A similar work was imperatively needed by the nations of Christendom, during many centuries ; for enormous evils were in active and virulent operation, and the word of God was displaced from its supreme authority by the devices of men.

It was, for example, the great doctrine of Christianity, that Jesus was "the Lamb of God," that by his "one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," and that having once died, "he ever liveth." But now it was maintained that whenever a priest took a wafer—a small piece of unleavened bread, and consecrated it by saying, "*Hoc est corpus meum*," "This is my body," that it became changed into "the very body and blood, soul and divinity," of our Lord and Saviour, and that he was thus continually offered as a sacrifice to the Father. Such was the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation—such was the declared ceremonial of the mass.

The doctrine of Christ's intercession was as wilfully set aside as that of his perfect and once offered atonement. Instead of the people being told that "there is one Mediator between

God and men," and only one, as the apostles affirmed, St. Anthony, St. Francis, and a multitude more, were individually exhibited as a medium through whom the Divine favour was bestowed. These persons were described, too, as givers of good, so that it was said blessings were to be entreated from them, as well as expected through their means. Thus, to the gross error of describing them as *channels* of good, was added the one still more revolting, of representing them as *sources* of good. The highest place among the so-called saints was assigned to the virgin Mary, not only as a mediatrix, but as the sovereign bestower of the richest blessings. Thus, men were drawn away from "the fountain of living waters," and directed to "broken cisterns which can hold no water."

The grievous and ruinous errors that prevailed, were constantly made to subserve the interests of monks and priests; for it was declared that they interceded only for those who deserved well of certain orders of laymen and ecclesiastics, founded by the virgin or the saints. The monk or the priest, therefore, prescribed alike the service that was to be performed, the money that was to be offered,

or the terms on which the one might suffice for the other ; for though prayers were to be said, and hymns to be chanted, and journeys to be made, yet money could secure an exemption from them all. He who had no money was left to himself ; he who had money might do as he pleased, assured that he was right and safe. Money's worth had the same power, and the produce of the field or the dairy was no less acceptable to the monk or priest than the current coin.

To feed the superstition thus engendered and sustained, pilgrimages were prescribed ; and not only were they engaged in by the common people, but by bishops, princes, and kings. Numberless were the places accounted holy. The shrine of St. James, at Compostella, in Spain, was an object of special attraction. Tours and Rome were also places of resort ; while multitudes thought, in their infatuation, that

“ Each holy vow  
Less quickly from the unstable soul would fade,  
Offered where Christ in agony was laid,”

and flocked from all quarters to pay their devotions at Jerusalem.

The devotee might, however, find relics at

home as well as abroad. At Wittemberg he was directed, amidst many thousands, to a piece of wood, "from the cradle of our Lord;" at Schaffhausen, to "the breath of St. Joseph, received by Nicodemus in his glove;" and everywhere to "a fragment of the true cross!" Relics were even hawked about the country by persons who hired them of their owners, and obtained all the profit they could from their exhibition. The great outcry was "Money! money!" and the general belief was, that there was nothing desirable which it could not procure.

The inevitable consequence of substituting tradition for the inspired word of God, and of gross superstition for "pure and undefiled religion," was, as of old, the extreme degeneracy of the people. The priests, instead of being the last, were the first to yield to the power of corruption. Gerhard, a Romanist, affirms that the monks receded not only from the rule of Christ's word, but also from those of their respective fraternities, as Roman Catholic authors testify.\* Referring to the abbeys, Burnet says, "The monks in these houses, abounding in wealth, and living at ease and

\* Gerhardi Loci Theo. sect. 266, Jenæ, 1617.

in idleness, did so degenerate, that, from the twelfth century downwards, their reputation abated much ; and the privileges of sanctuaries were a general grievance, and often complained of in parliaments, for they received all that fled to them, which put a great stop to justice, and did encourage the most criminal offenders. They became lewd and dissolute, and so impudent in it, that some of their farms were let for bringing in a yearly tribute to their lusts.”\* And archbishop Secker, alluding to “the five or six ages” preceding the Reformation, says that, “by the confession of their own historians, both clergy and laity were so universally and so monstrously ignorant and vicious, that nothing was too bad for them to do, or too absurd for them to believe.”†

No check was presented to appalling and increasing corruption by the personal characters of the superior orders of the hierarchy. Many of them greatly preferred the tumults of the battle-field to the ceremonies of the altar. Baldwin, archbishop of Treves, was constantly warring with his neighbours and vassals, demolishing their castles, rearing fortresses to

\* Burnet's Hist. Ref. vol. i. p. 248.

† First Sermon on Popery. Sermons, vol. vi.



defend what he acquired, and largely extending his territory. Another prelate, who, while administering justice, wore under his robes a coat of mail, and held a long sword in his hand, was accustomed to say, he was not afraid of five barbarians, if they attacked him in fair fight. Everywhere this martial spirit was displayed. The struggle between the bishops and the citizens was incessant, and numerous were the victims of episcopal vengeance. The cardinals were notorious for pride, luxury, and other crimes; and the pontiffs were also of infamous character.

If it be said, these are the statements of those who wish "to make the worse appear the better reason," an appeal to Roman Catholics themselves will justify all that has been affirmed. Many are the bold and faithful pens which delineate the moral traits of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. "The church," said the cardinal Alliaco, "is come to such a state, that it is worthy of being governed only by reprobates." \* Petrarch pronounced the court of Avignon, "the sink and sewer of all vice, and the house of hardship and misery," while he lamented, in general, "the dereliction of all

\* Alliaco in *Hard.* l. 424. *Lenfant*, ii. 276.

piety, charity, faith, shame, sanctity, integrity, justice, honesty, candour, humanity, and fear of God." \* According to Mariana, "Every enormity had passed into a custom and law, and was committed without fear. Shame and modesty were banished, while, by a monstrous irregularity, the most dreadful outrages, perfidy, and treason, were better recompensed - than the brightest virtue. The wickedness of the pontiff descended to the people." †

Antoninus, addressing in the sixteenth century the fathers and senators assembled at Trent, lamented the general "depravation of manners, the turpitude of vice, the contempt of the sacraments, the solicitude of earthly things, and the forgetfulness of celestial good, and of all Christian piety." He says, "The pastor was without vigilance, the preacher without works, the law without subjection, the people without obedience, the monk without devotion, the rich without humility, the female without compassion, the young without discipline, and every Christian without religion." All the crimes which mankind can perpetrate, he describes as the terrific result. ‡

\* Petrarcha, in Bruy. iii. 470.

† Mariana, v. 718.

‡ Labb. xx. 1219—1223.

It is needless to augment the proofs thus given of prevailing and enormous evil. The spectacle of iniquity presented to the view is truly appalling. As we recall the visitation of the cities of the plain, and the still earlier destruction by the flood of the world of transgressors, we cannot but adore the Divine forbearance that was displayed, in sparing those who, professedly Christian, were enemies of the Saviour's cross, counting the blood of the covenant an unclean thing, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace. Truly God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and truth !

There was, doubtless, in many minds a secret and personal conviction of error, even in the darkest ages. Within the pale of the Romish church were manifestly some who reposed their whole trust in the only Mediator between God and men. A bishop of Basle, for example, had his name written on a picture painted on glass, and around it a motto, which he wished to be always before him, "My hope is in the cross of Christ ; I seek grace, and not works."

A Carthusian monk is said to have written the following acknowledgment : " O most merciful God ! I know that I can only be saved,

and satisfy thy righteousness, by the merit, the innocent suffering and death, of thy well-beloved son. Holy Jesus, my salvation is in thy hands. Thou canst not withdraw thy hands from me, for they have created, reformed, and redeemed me. Thou hast inscribed my name with a pen of iron, in rich mercy, and so as nothing can efface it, on thy side, thy hands, and thy feet."

The confession thus made was placed in a wooden box, which was inclosed in a hole of this monk's cell. So lately as the end of the year 1776 it was discovered, in taking down an old building, which had been part of a Carthusian convent in Basle. To this incident we are indebted for the delightful proof just given of evangelical piety.

A monk, named Arnoldi, is said to have daily exclaimed in his cell, "O Lord Jesus Christ! I believe that in thee alone I have redemption and righteousness;" and Anselm, of Canterbury, in a work prepared for the dying, exhorted them to "look solely to the merits of Jesus Christ." The sentiments expressed in each of these instances are clearly at variance with the doctrines of Romanists, and from their Scriptural character are exceedingly interesting.

But, in order to a reformation, it was necessary that there should be not only a personal conviction of the guilt and danger of prevailing errors, but an actual and determined resistance to the established order of things. It was indispensable that the spirit of John the Baptist should return to the world. The necessity was urgent, not only for a simple reliance on the only sacrifice for sin, but for a public testimony to the truth in the face of suffering, imprisonment, and death. And such a testimony was actually given ; the Holy Spirit raised up men in various countries of Europe, who counted not their lives dear unto them, that they might "testify the gospel of the grace of God." We proceed, therefore, to take a glimpse of their character and course.

## CHAPTER II.

Romantic and picturesque valleys—Christians early separated from Rome—The Vaudois—Peter Waldo—Works of the Vaudois in verse and prose—Persecution of the people—Fearful ravages of their foes.

THE traveller, in the lower portion of the division of the Cottian Alps, which lies between Monte Viso and Monte Genevre, having the plains of Piedmont on the east, and the province of Dauphiny, in France, on the west, beholds stretched out before him a striking and diversified scene.

Situated on the west side of the Angrogna torrent, at a short distance from the angle which is formed by its junction with the Pelice, is La Tour, or, as the Italians call it, Torre. Westward appear verdant slopes, covered with mulberry and chesnut trees, vineyards, and orchards, rising rapidly into the mountain regions of the lofty Vandalin, which separates the valley of Lucerne from Angrogna,

and juts forth the prodigious crag of Castelluzzo, the dark shadow of which is thrown on the valley below. In these slopes, and upon the terraces above them, stand the picturesque cottages of the peasants, each having its little portion of cultivated land around it. Beyond the stupendous crag just mentioned, the valley is seen stretching back among the lofty mountains on either side, and the view is terminated in the background by the summits of the Alps bordering on France. On the south of the town is seen the Pelice, meandering its course through fields and meadows, which it now fertilizes and now devastates; and beyond which Mount Envers, richly adorned with forests and flowers, forms an interesting bound to the prospect in that direction.\*

La Tour may be regarded as the Protestant capital of these romantic and picturesque valleys, which were the dwelling-places of witnesses for God during many ages of widespread and terrific degeneracy.

The existence of a number (greater or less) of Christians, separated from Rome, in the north of Italy, is clearly ascertained by the epistles of Hatto, who, in the year 945, held

\* Dr. Henderson's Vaudois.

the diocese of Vercelli, situated between Turin and Milan. The letters of this bishop have been preserved. In some of them, he speaks of persons who had left the church, and describes them as being in the neighbourhood of his own diocese. The doctrinal and other points which he specifies as separating them from the church of which he was a bishop, appear to be those which were held by the Vaudois.

In one of the most ancient productions of this people, the "Noble Lesson," their name is given, not in the Frenchified form in which it is now familiar, but as pronounced by the people themselves. The passage is as follows:—

"If any man be found,  
Who loves God and fears Jesus Christ;  
Who will not slander, nor swear, nor lie,  
Nor commit adultery, nor kill, nor steal,  
Nor avenge himself of his enemy;  
They say, He is a Vaudes, and deserves to be punished."

Abstracting the local signification, the term is equivalent, as one of reproach, to Cathar, or Puritan, liberally applied to those in the north of Italy who served God in simplicity and sincerity, in contradistinction from the rest of their countrymen, whose religion was taught by the commandments of men. That the "Noble Lesson" was written so far back as



A.D. 1110 has been generally believed, and is still strenuously maintained, on the ground that the specified date actually occurs in it.\*

About this time appeared a very remarkable man, Peter Waldo. He was a native and merchant of Lyons, and was induced to leave the church of Rome from the recent introduction of the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the idolatrous worship connected with its observance. Convinced that no change passed on the wafer, in the so-called act of consecration, he refused to bend before it. Abandoning his commercial engagements, he distributed his goods among the poor, became a preacher of the Reformation, and soon gathered around him many followers.

Up to this period the only edition of the Scriptures was the Vulgate, in Latin; and to Waldo, assisted most probably by others, belongs the honour of first translating the Gospels, and some other portions of Scripture, into the French language. Threatened in consequence with excommunication and the penalties of heresy, he refused to yield, and so much was he favoured by the people, that they afforded

\* Henderson's Vaudois, p. 5.

him shelter or concealment for three years. At length, the pope anathematized him and his adherents, and charged the archbishop to proceed with the utmost rigour. No longer could a refuge be found in Lyons. Waldo, however, escaped from the rage of persecution, and his disciples were generally dispersed.

Waldo obtained an asylum in Dauphiny, where his preaching was eminently successful ; but as persecution again arose, he fled into Picardy, where his ministry was also honoured of God. Subsequently he proceeded to Germany, proclaiming the gospel with untiring zeal, and rejoicing over many who received the truth. He finally settled in Bohemia, where he died in 1179, after a ministry of twenty-one years. Many of his disciples sought safety among the Vaudois of Piedmont, whose numbers continued and increased in the north of Italy, and the south of France. In the latter country, they were generally called Albigenses, from their inhabiting chiefly the district of Albigeois.

To Léger, the historian and Vaudois pastor, we are indebted for the preservation of the original manuscripts possessed by his church, from the years 1100 to 1230. These works, in

verse and prose, in the Romance, or Vaudois language, form the stock of a great number of similar productions, animated by the same spirit, written in the same dialect, or in Latin, at different periods, but almost all prior to the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Anticipating, perhaps, the storm that was rising against his church, Léger collected the writings of the Vaudois, and sent them in 1653 to sir Samuel Morland, the English ambassador at the court of Turin, who brought them to England, and deposited them in the library of the University of Cambridge.

Some of these writings are controversial, but their general character is doctrinal and practical. The great truths of the gospel are taught in the terms which the Holy Spirit has chosen. Faith and good works, the contemplation of Christ, and a life of obedience and devotedness to the Saviour, are happily and invariably combined. Patience and resignation under the ills of life, the duties of pastors and spiritual guides, of husbands and wives, of parents and children, the forgiveness of injuries, and the exercise of charity and brotherly love, have all their proper and appointed place. So high a standard of truth and morals at the close of

the eleventh century, shows a profound knowledge of the gospel of Christ.

The Vaudois church engraved on its seal a burning torch, with the motto, "The light shineth in darkness,"\* and in accordance with it displayed great missionary zeal. Attired in coarse habits, and absolutely bare-footed, the teachers of the people privately travelled, two and two, across the mountains and along the valleys of the Cottian Alps. They remind us of the evangelists sent forth by our Lord, and of the apostles whom he afterwards charged to bear through the earth the glad tidings of mercy.

In a process instituted by the inquisitor-general against a widow, she acknowledged that there came to the house of her husband two strangers in grey clothes, who, as it seemed to her, spake Italian or the dialect of Lombardy, whom her husband received into their house "for the love of God." We can easily picture those holy men, partaking with the family of their frugal evening meal, and concerned that their conversation should be "seasoned with salt," and "ministering grace to the hearers." And then, after thanksgivings

\* *Lux lucet in tenebris.*

are offered for that humble repast, we see one of them producing his book, containing, he says, "the Gospels and other precepts of the law." He reads a portion ; he offers a simple exposition of its truths ; he commends them affectionately to the consciences and hearts of all assembled, as absolutely necessary to holiness and happiness ; and then all bow down before the throne of God, in the exercise of prayer. How simple was such instrumentality ! yet it served to implant and sustain piety in the souls of multitudes, in times of bitter and relentless persecution ; for "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, . . . that no flesh should glory in his presence." In every instance of vital and prosperous religion a voice addresses us : "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

An author of the twelfth century, in Languedoc, Bernard de Foncald, says : "These Vaudois, although condemned by the sovereign pontiff, (Lucius II.,) continued to diffuse with surprising audacity, far and wide, through all the world, the poison of their perfidy. This is why Bernard, lord archbishop of Narbonne, opposed them, (at the council of Lombers, when

bishop of Lodève,) in the name of the church, as a fortress ; in fact, having assembled a considerable number of the clergy and laity, monks and seculars, he brought them to trial. In a word, after their cause had been examined with great care, they were condemned.”\*

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, they were brought into notice, in consequence of the immense increase of those who, under diverse appellations, were generally branded with the name of heretics. Pope Innocent III. stirred up the civil power to make war against them. In a letter to Bertram, bishop of Metz, written about the year 1200, he states, that several of the clergy had procured translations into French of the four Gospels, the Epistles of Paul, the Psalms, the book of Job, and other parts of the sacred writings, and ordered that those who read them should be driven out and persecuted with the utmost barbarity. With revolting profanity he granted, “in the name of the Lord of hosts,” to all who should march against the Albigensian† pestilence, the pardon of sin, the glory of martyrdom, and the possession of

\* Maxima Biblioth. P. P. t. 24, pp. 1585—6.

† The pope employs here a term derived from the name of the Albigenses, whom he regarded as equally heretical.

heaven. He specially promised that those who fell in battle should pass to heaven, without touching on purgatory. These rewards assembled half a million of warriors—bishops, canons, soldiers, and people, from Italy, France, and Germany, ready to riot in blood, for the defence of Romanism, and the extinction of what they called heresy.

Of the first attempts at persecution in the valleys of Lucerna and Perosa, there is extant no detailed account. All we know is, that one of the Vaudois leaders was entrapped, and sent to Marseilles, where he was imprisoned: he was afterwards recalled, by the pope's orders, to Piedmont, to be judged, and subjected to torture, if needful, that he might denounce his associates.

The agents of persecution subsequently caused much suffering, and made many victims. One of them, Borelli, having cited in vain all the inhabitants of Frassinière, Argentière, and the vale of Layse, to his tribunal, caused a great number to be arrested. From the latter valley one hundred and fifty Vaudois men were brought to Grenoble and burned alive, besides many women, girls, and even young children. Eighty victims were con-

signed to the secular power in the two other valleys; and, in many instances, they were executed with no other sentence of the so-called "holy office," than that they were criminals. A Romanist says, "There is evidence that many accused persons were thrown into prison only for the purpose of seizing on their property. Blood or gold—this is what the inquisition required."\*

Borelli is charged with fearful ravages in the winter of 1400, when the mountains were covered with snow, and were, therefore, difficult of access. Alarmed by the unlooked-for outrage, the villagers attempted to escape to one of the highest mountains of the Alps. It was indeed a piteous spectacle: murderous foes eagerly pursuing men of peace, more anxious for their wives and children than themselves, while many an unhappy mother carried a cradle in one hand, and in the other led some of her tender offspring, numbers of whom were slain before they could reach the mountains. Those who escaped wandered over these snowy heights, amidst the darkness of the night, destitute of all support or shelter, till many, benumbed by the cold, fell a prey to its intensity

\* Perrin, *Hist. de Vaudois*, p. 114.



Their enemies, meanwhile, plundered their dwellings, and destroyed what they could not carry off. They are charged with having hung on a tree a poor, aged, Vaudois woman, whom they met with on the mountain of Méane; and for more than a century afterwards the people were accustomed to speak of this dreadful attack, as if it were still present before their eyes.

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, the persecution of the Vaudois appears to have ceased for a time. Many of those assailed in other parts sought refuge in the valleys. So great did the multitude become, that the land could not support them, and numbers went to Italy and Naples. About the year 1500, the Vaudois of Frassinière and other valleys, to escape the rage of persecution, established themselves in the neighbourhood of their brethren, in the valley of Volturata. In this way, the Vaudois spread themselves over the kingdom of Naples, and even to Sicily.

These colonies maintained direct and constant relation with the Vaudois of the valleys, who, according to the decision of their synods, provided them with pastors. The barbes, or pastors, complying with their established cus-

tom, undertook their distant journey by two and two; one of them, advanced in years, of practical experience, and already acquainted with persons and places; the other, younger, and who became his companion, in order to be trained for the same service. In going and returning, they visited the faithful who were scattered through the towns and country places of Italy, exhorting and affording them consolation. The barbes of the valleys possessed a house in each of the cities of Florence, Geneva, Venice, and probably in other places; but it was only at intervals, when the pastors were engaged in their missionary travels, that the faithful whom they visited fully enjoyed an evangelical ministry.

In the year 1487, the papal nuncio instigated the king of France, the duke of Savoy, and other neighbouring princes, to collect an army of 18,000 men, for the purpose of extirpating the inhabitants of the valleys. Wanton cruelties were committed by these troops, augmented by 6,000 volunteers from Piedmont. In the valley of Angrogna, however, the principal point of attack, the Vaudois, though hitherto familiar only with the arts of peace, made so spirited a defence, that the armed

band was routed with great loss. Their subsequent history, for a long period, was one of oppression and persecution, mitigated by partial relief.

In 1665, a storm of unprecedented violence burst on the Vaudois. A large armed force took possession of the stronghold Pra del Tor, and gained the entire command of the country. Under the perfidious pretence that they did not intend to remain, the inhabitants who had fled were induced to return, only to suffer the most dreadful outrages. Houses and churches were destroyed by fire. A general massacre took place. The most horrid crimes were perpetrated. It was as if the country were ravaged by fiends in human shape.

It has been well said of the Vaudois: "If ever any church was symbolized more appropriately than another by *the bush burning but not consumed*, it is theirs. Every rock on their mountains has been stained, every vale and cavern in which they sought shelter and rest has been soaked with the blood of these saints. In every land to which they fled as exiles, and which they endeavoured to enrich with the knowledge of Christ, the rage of Rome overtook them, and cruelties of which Rome only, drunk

with the blood of saints, was capable, were resorted to, for the purpose of effecting their apostasy or extermination. 'The former was found impossible—the latter in some cases was accomplished.'

No wonder that their sufferings led Milton to pour forth the impassioned prayer :—

“Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughter'd saints, whose bones  
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold.  
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,  
When all our fathers worshipp'd stocks and stones,  
Forget not : in thy book record their groans,  
Who were thy sheep, and in thine ancient fold ;  
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that roll'd  
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans  
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they  
To heaven. Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow  
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway  
The triple tyrant ; that from these may grow  
A hundred fold ; who having learn'd thy way,  
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.”

## CHAPTER III.

The Provençals—Rise of the Albigenses—Count Raymond of Toulouse—His nephew, Raymond of Beziers—Crusade against the Albigenses—The taking of Carcassone—St. Dominic—Origin of the Inquisition.

It is desirable now to glance at another race of the advocates and defenders of the truth in early times, to whom allusion has already been made. Languedoc, Provençe, Catalonia, and all the surrounding countries which depended on the king of Arragon, were peopled by an industrious and intelligent race of men, addicted to commerce and the arts, and still more to poetry. They had formed the Provençal language, which, separating itself from the Walloon Roman, or French, was distinguished by more harmonious inflections, by a richer vocabulary, by expressions more picturesque, and by greater flexibility. This language, studied by all the genius of the age, appeared destined to become the first and most elegant of

the languages of Europe. Those who used it renounced the name of Frenchmen for that of Provençals; they endeavoured by it to form themselves into a nation, and to separate themselves absolutely from the French, to whom they were indeed inferior in war, but whom they greatly excelled in all the attainments of civilization.\*

Among the intelligent, polite, and gay Provençals sprang up, in the twelfth century, the truly enlightened and pious Albigeois, or Albigenes. The contrast between the grey frieze of the latter, and the gay armour of the former, was not greater than that of their respective manners. Yet they were alike in their history and its issue. They struggled for liberty, civil and religious, for light rendered the darkness visible. Then came the reading of the Scriptures, and the preaching of their truths. Then the spirit of mental freedom began to work; people became bold enough to examine the doctrines they were taught, and to avow what others accounted heresy. Several of their confessions still remain, and include essentially the faith of the Reformation.

\* Sismondi.

Pope Innocent first sent against them a missionary expedition. Two and two these monks, who took their title from Dominic, the Spaniard, whom the pontiff placed at their head, marched through its villages barefooted, preaching their doctrines, and pretending to work miracles. But the efforts of these apostles of superstition excited only the derision and scorn of "the sons of heresy and error" to whom they came. "The obdurate people," says Benedict, "showed no desire for conversion, but, on the contrary, treated their instructors with contempt and reproach."\* According to Mariana, "The Albigenses increased every day; and, in their stupidity, rejoiced in their own blindness."†

Other measures were now taken. A declaration was drawn from the simple people of their faith, and statements were obtained of the names and abodes of the most prominent, enlightened, or zealous among them. Those who were yet in the communion of the church of Rome were asked why they did not exterminate the heretics. The answer was, "We cannot do so; we live among them; they are our relatives and friends, and we behold the

\* Benedict, 1. li. 2.

† Mariana, ii. 686.

goodness of their lives." The heretics themselves were questioned, and their answers tortured to suit the purposes of the subtle inquirers. To arms there was then a speedy resort. The pope, as we have seen, promised all who should march against the Albigensian pestilence, the pardon of sin, the glory of martyrdom, and the possession of heaven.

The history of count Raymond of Toulouse is intimately connected with that of the Albigenses. He was undoubtedly one of those uncertain, undecided characters, who are more likely to injure than to benefit the cause they espouse. The struggle in which he engaged was one to preserve his own rights ; but these were blended with the properties, liberties, and lives of the people of God. Such indeed was the case with many a Provençal lord, and many a gallant knight of that period.

Far superior to count Raymond of Toulouse was his nephew, Raymond Roger, viscount of Beziers, who was deeply interested in defending the lives and liberties of his Albigensian subjects and friends. "Pestilential man !" wrote pope Innocent to his uncle Raymond, " what pride has seized your heart, to refuse peace with your neighbours, and brave the



Divine laws by protecting the enemies of the faith? Do you not fear eternal flames? Ought you not to dread the temporal chastisements you have provoked by so many crimes?"

Frightened into submission at the hostile preparations making against him, the vacillating Raymond engaged to exterminate the heretics from his states; but his heart was not in the work of slaughter. Far too slowly did it proceed to please Peter del Castelnau, the pope's legate, who, coming to visit this sovereign lord, assailed him as a perjurer, a supporter of heretics, and a traitor. Nor did he fail to pronounce the sentence of excommunication—that fearful ban, whose blighting denunciation is supposed instantly to alight upon its victim, and then to follow him step by step on his earthly way, withering all that he loves, all that he has, all that he does, tracking him even to the grave itself, and clinging to his soul, in the unseen world, like an infected garment, destroying rest, and peace, and hope, for ever and ever.

But the course of Castelnau was suddenly terminated. In a hostelry beside the Rhone he was killed, in a brawl with one of the followers of Raymond of Toulouse. This sealed

the count's fate. He was anathematized in all churches, the following being the terms of the papal bull: "And, as following the canonical sanctions of the holy fathers, we must not keep faith with those who keep not faith with God, and who are separated from the communion of the faithful, we discharge, by apostolical authority, all those who believe themselves bound towards this count, by an oath either of alliance or fidelity; we permit every Catholic man to pursue his person, to occupy and retain his territories, especially for the purpose of exterminating heresy." Such was the cruel and impious decree of a professed follower of "the meek and lowly Jesus."

Raymond shrank in dismay from a war with the church, now impending from this home crusade. To avert it, if possible, his nephew accompanied him to its leader, the abbot of Citeaux, and the legate of the pope, Arnold Amalric. The count and the viscount declared their innocence of the death of Castelnau, their freedom from all taint of heresy, and their anxious desire to be heard by the pope, and to propitiate his favour. They found, however, that they had nothing to expect; and on their withdrawal, Raymond Roger informed his

uncle that their only hope now lay in making as good a defence as they could against the crusading host.

Raymond of Toulouse, terrified, vacillating, and superstitious, was only anxious to appease by submission, instead of resisting by valour. After much altercation, the uncle and the nephew parted ; the one to dispatch an embassy, headed by an archbishop, to the pontiff, praying for pardon and peace—the other, to fortify his towns, and prepare his followers for the onslaught.

The papal conditions offered to Raymond of Toulouse were, that he should join the crusade, and assist in destroying the heretics ; and that, as a guarantee of his faith, he should deliver up seven of his strongest castles to the papal forces ; as a recompense, he was, in due time, to receive absolution. Arnold Amalric was also counselled “to employ craft with regard to this count ; for,” added the pope, “in this case it ought to be called prudence. We must attack separately those who are separated from unity. Leave for a time the count of Toulouse, employing towards him a wise dissimulation, that the other heretics may be the more easily defeated ; and that, afterwards,

we may crush him when we shall be left alone." \*

At length, the crusading host was assembled, of which large numbers were at once poured into the region of Provence. For a term of service of only forty days, spiritual indulgences were to be abundantly granted, with the prospect of the plunder of the Albigenses. The preaching monks heralded the army, and were followed by warriors armed with scythes and clubs.

The count of Toulouse, observing their approach towards his states, renewed his supplications and submissions, delivered up his seven castles, and was conducted into the church of St. Gilles, with a cord about his neck. He was afterwards scourged round the altar, in token of his reconciliation to the church and the pope, and he was then allowed to take the cross, and to fight against his friends and relatives.

His nephew, on the contrary, had repaired to Montpelier, where the crusading army, with the abbot of Citeaux, had halted. With that functionary he again pleaded his cause, but only to be told that he must as he best

\* Epistles of Innocent III. Hist. de Languedoc.

could, defend himself by arms, that words were of no avail, and that he should be shown no mercy. Then Raymond of Beziers sounded the tocsin of war through his petty states, and summoned his vassals and friends to a deadly struggle.

The crusaders now advanced ; one castle after another fell or capitulated ; and wherever heresy was thought to exist, men, women, and children were exultingly burned. The host was led by Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, in right of his mother, an English countess, who, having whetted his sword against the infidels in Palestine, wielded it with greater pleasure against the Provençals, whose lands could reward his fiery zeal. His guide was the abbot of Citeaux.

The young viscount, menaced with dangers, could only employ simple bravery for his defence, trusting in the righteousness of his cause. His two most important cities and strongholds were Beziers and Carcassone, distant from each other about six or seven hours' journey. Having seen the first strengthened and provisioned, he assembled the citizens and garrison, described their situation, and exhorted

them to defend their lives to the last. And scarcely had he left them, in order to hasten to Carcassone—the fortress where his latest hopes were centred—before the white-cloaked crusaders were seen, in three divisions, advancing towards Beziers.

They encamped beneath the walls in the month of July, 1209. To them the bishop of the city treacherously went forth, bearing to the future legate a list of all the actual or suspected heretics, and stipulating that if these were delivered to the flames, the lives of the others should be spared. He returned to urge on the citizens the surrender of the most helpless of their number. "Tell the legate," replied these gallant men, "that our city is good and strong; that our Lord will not fail to succour us in our great necessity; and that rather than commit the baseness demanded of us, we would eat our own children." But when they beheld the assemblage of tents and pavilions, they were greatly astonished, and began to doubt the goodness of their city. To avoid the horrors of a siege, when conducted by such a host, they thought one blow would be most effective: and, while their

enemies were yet employed in tracing out their camp, the garrison made a sortie, and attacked them suddenly.

But the trained soldiers of Rome, and the warriors of Palestine, had little to fear from the undrilled though ardent army of Provence, who were easily driven back. On a given signal, the immense troops of the besiegers, rising at once, swept on to the assault, bore down the scanty band to the gates, entered the city with storm, and secured for themselves its possession. In the haste and surprise of the moment, the victorious leaders demanded of the abbot how they should treat the citizens, some of whom were accounted heretics, and others not. The legate of the pope pronounced the memorable answer: "Kill them all!—the Lord will know those that are his." \*

The fixed population of Beziers did not exceed 15,000 persons, but all the inhabitants of the country had either taken refuge there, or sent thither for security their wives and families. The multitude hurried to the churches; the clergy and canons surrounded the altar; and the bells were tolled. But these bells became fewer and fewer, and their sounds

\* Velly, iii. 441.

fainter and fainter, until, horrible to relate, not a hand was left to toll them—not a living creature remained in Beziers! According to the abbot of Citeaux, there were 15,000 victims; according to others, more likely to approach the truth, 60,000 were mercilessly butchered.\*

Meanwhile the young viscount, burning with grief and indignation, shut up himself and the remnant of his friends, followers, and vassals, in Carcassone, vowing to defend their lives and liberties with his arm to his latest breath. Around him were those who had lived in pleasure, the lovers of gaiety, and song, and learning, those who had given up their hearts to piety, and wanted to serve God according to the dictates of conscience, and those also who, without dissenting from the church of Rome, spurned at tyranny and thralldom, temporal and spiritual, and who esteemed it better to die as men and soldiers than to live as slaves. But beyond the walls, far almost as the eye could reach, stood the tents of the besiegers, and within them were the gay, chivalrous soldiers, to whom war was a pastime; the zealot, who fought in the hope of meriting salvation; the penitent, who fought for pardon;

\* Mezeray, ii. 619.



the needy, who fought for plunder—a host which might well cause even a stout heart to quail.

The ardent Raymond Roger twice repulsed the besiegers, and, full of hope, bore the tidings to the anxious, trembling friends within his castle. But, at length, the suburb he defended for a week proved untenable, and, setting fire to it, he withdrew with his troops within the citadel. For a time Simon de Montfort and the blood-thirsty abbot were kept at bay; when, finding arms useless, they had recourse to other means.

Don Pedro II., king of Arragon, was the uncle of Raymond Roger, and, admiring the heroism of his nephew, which he foresaw must fail, went to the camp of the crusaders, to negotiate for his deliverance. The abbot and De Montfort, seeing the dissatisfaction of their troops, hailed the visit of the Spanish prince as most auspicious, and engaged him to enter Carcassone, and confer with its young lord.

Raymond rejoiced to see his gallant friend and relative, and freely acknowledged that he could not maintain his position, “on account,” he said, “of the multitude of countrymen, women, and children, who are here. I cannot

reckon them, and they die every day in numbers. But were only myself and my people here, I would rather die of famine than surrender to the legate."

On these expressions being related to the abbot, he sent word to the viscount that the terms offered him were, to quit Carcassone, with twelve others, leaving all the rest of the garrison and the people to the disposal of himself and his ministers. "Rather than leave the least of them to his mercy," said the viscount, "I will be flayed alive." Don Pedro, who had carried the proposal against his will, heard with pleasure its indignant rejection, and turning to the citizens, said, "You now learn what you have to expect: mind and defend yourselves well; for he who defends himself finds good mercy at the last."

Scarcely had the king of Arragon announced the result of his mission, than a furious assault was made on Carcassone. But the defenders, inspired by all that makes men—yes, and even women—brave, gallantly repulsed them; delicate hands aiding in the work of withstanding their bitter and remorseless foes. Disappointed and wearied, the crusaders retired: their term of service for forty days, in which many had

found little pleasure or honour, was about to expire, and numbers preferred to renounce it. Simon de Montfort and the legate alike became uneasy ; and viscount Beziers, unconscious of what was passing in the camp of his adversaries, was oppressed with fears and anxieties for his people. The horrors of famine were beginning to be felt ; the cisterns were drying up ; and wives and mothers, as well as soldiers and leaders, looked anxiously at him.

In this extremity of the conflicting parties a proposal was made for an amicable interview with the legate ; Raymond gladly accepted it, supposing that his rights only required to be pleaded to be promptly admitted. On the contrary, the legate coolly told him that he must leave his people to make what terms they could for themselves, but as for himself, he was, and must remain, a prisoner. Three hundred followers, who had accompanied him to the crusading camp, were indeed already in custody, and he was consigned first to the duke of Burgundy, and afterwards, from his leniency, to that of the savage De Montfort.

At sunrise next morning, the crusaders prepared to fall on the devoted Carcassone. Against it they advanced with shoutings, and

in formidable array. But, its stillness might have cast a chill on many a heart. Not a sound was heard ; no armour glanced in the sunbeams ; no anxious, timid forms appeared, stealing a hurried look over the battlements on the fearful plain below ; the banner still waved from the keep, but around it was the stillness of death. Onwards, however, did the crusaders advance ; they entered Carcassone, but only to find it a desert ; its streets, its houses, were empty ! For intelligence of their lord's seizure had been conveyed, by some means, to the people he had so gallantly defended, together with the information that a secret passage conducted through a cave of extraordinary length to another place of refuge. Thus the walls of Carcassone alone were left, as they are to this day, a memorial of the past !

The three hundred knights of the viscount, together with some of the poor creatures who were found about Carcassone, were committed to the flames. It is believed that Raymond Roger died by poison. His lands, honours, and titles, were conferred on De Montfort. Don Pedro, after a vain attempt at an alliance with the papal powers, fell at Murêt fighting against them. At the siege of Toulouse, a sortie was

made while De Montfort was attending mass. News was brought to him of the fact, but he was unwilling to quit the church. At the moment of the elevation of the host, his patience was exhausted ; he rushed forth to lead on his soldiers. A stone, said to be thrown by the hand of a woman from the wall of the city, struck him on the head, and the scourge of the Provençals was no more. Raymond of Toulouse, adhering to the church that stripped him of his lands and dignity, endured all the horrors of excommunication, remained on his knees outside the churches which he was not allowed to pollute by entering, and died, as he lived, the victim of superstition. His body was not suffered to have the rites of burial.

The traveller may well linger on the remains of Carcassone with deep interest. The new town was once only a suburb to the ancient one, and a part of its old dark walls are to be seen amidst the modern white buildings of this cheerful and flourishing place. The picturesque and frowning fortress is, perhaps, one of the most unchanged of the feudal edifices of France. There still uprise the great, dark, giant walls—the interior ones at least—that, in the beginning of the thirteenth century, were surrounded by

the crusaders of Rome. These walls surmount an extensive platform of rock, which rises out of the large plains so general in Languedoc. Standing on the battlements of the fortress, the imagination can easily cover the plain beneath with the pomp and circumstance of war, while the mind is appalled by the remembered atrocities so cruelly perpetrated.

Lavaur, a city of Languedoc, was taken by storm in 1211; Aimeric, the governor, was hanged on a gibbet, and Girarda, his lady, was thrown into a well, and overwhelmed with stones. Eighty gentlemen, who had been made prisoners, were slaughtered like sheep, in cold blood. Four hundred were burned alive, to the great joy of the crusaders.\* The soldiery attended high mass in the morning, and then proceeded during the day to waste the country and murder its population. "One shudders," says Velly, "while he relates such horrors." And yet, he says, "the army of the cross exulted in the massacre of Lavaur, and the clergy sung a hymn to the Creator for the glorious victory."†

Languedoc, a country flourishing and cultivated, was thoroughly wasted by the ruthless

\* Velly, iii. 454.

† Ibid. iii. 454, 121. Other authorities attest the same fact

and cruel desolators of Rome. Its cities were burned ; its inhabitants were swept away with fire and sword ; its plains became a desert. A hundred thousand Albigenses fell, it is said, in one day, and their bodies were heaped together and burned. For three months detachments of soldiers were dispatched in every direction to demolish houses, destroy vineyards, and ruin the hopes of the husbandman. The women were treated with the utmost brutality. Every evil was recklessly perpetrated. The war, with all its sanguinary accompaniments, lasted twenty years ; and the Albigenses, during that time, were not the only sufferers. Three hundred thousand crusaders fell on the plains of Languedoc.

In this crusade, Dominic appeared, as we have seen, preaching and pretending to work miracles ; but he also encouraged the warriors in the work of massacre and murder. He marched at the head of the army with a crucifix in his hand, and urged the soldiers to deeds of death and destruction. According to Benedict, he was the inventor of the Inquisition. It had, during his superintendence, no legal tribunal, and the engines of torment were not what they were in after days. But he

inflicted sufferings on the suspected, at which the heart sickens. He convicted a hundred and eighty Albigenses, who were at one time committed to the flames. Such was the man, who to this day occupies a prominent place in the Romish calendar. The Roman missal, having eulogized his supposed merits, even prays for "temporal aid through his intercession!"

The inquisition was first established in Languedoc. In 1229, the council of Toulouse appointed a priest and three laymen to search for the partisans of heresy. The synod of Alby, in 1254, commissioned a clergyman and a layman to engage in the same dreadful task. The tribunal afterwards received various alterations and accessions of power, until it perpetrated the utmost atrocities in Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Goa.



## CHAPTER IV.

The Culdees—Columba—Iona—Labours and trials of Wycliffe—His translation of the Bible—John of Gaunt—Queen Anne of Bohemia—The Lollards—Lord Cobham—Followers of Wycliffe in Scotland.

THE members of a very ancient religious fraternity, called Culdees, exhibit such a simplicity of views and habits, as necessarily leads us to associate them with the men of more primitive times. Their principal seat was the island of Iona, or Icolmkil, one of the western islands of Scotland. They owe their establishment to Columba, a native of the last-mentioned country, who, after leading the northern Picts to Christianity, landed at Hii, or Iona, so early as the year 563, and received the island from the king of the people for the purpose of founding a college.

Here he taught his disciples the Scriptures, to the study of which he was devotedly attached. When they were duly qualified, Columba sent

them forth to evangelize the dark and benighted regions around. The college indeed was the seat and centre of literature and piety, and from hence these blessings were diffused, not only over the British islands, but through many parts of Europe. Its inmates and missionaries held no fellowship with the church of Rome; they determinately rejected many of its doctrines and practices, and for many centuries maintained their ground against the usurpations of the papal see.

The ruins of their edifices still remain as memorials of the zealous and devoted labours of Columba, his associates, and successors. Iona is the burial place of forty-eight Scotch crowned heads, four Irish kings, eight Norwegian princes or viceroys of the island, and a multitude of nobility and religious orders. The remains of the once celebrated cathedral cannot fail to interest the traveller, and to excite the deepest emotion in the heart of the Christian.

It was under the influence of such feelings that Dr. Johnson said, "We were now treading that illustrious island which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions; whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the

benefit of knowledge and the blessings of religion. To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible if it were endeavoured, and would be foolish if it were possible. Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses; whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Far from me and from my friends be such frigid philosophy, as may conduct us, indifferent and unmoved, over any ground that has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, and virtue. The man is little to be envied whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plains of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona."\*

Pope John xxii., in his bull for anointing king Robert Bruce, complained that there were many heretics in Scotland. In the eleventh century, Margaret, the queen of Malcolm, succeeded in establishing a general conformity both of doctrine and mode of worship with the church of Rome. For this she was canonized, and even chosen for the patron saint of Scotland.

England, meanwhile, greatly suffered from the

\* Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland.

Romish domination. Indeed, the unparalleled exactions of the pope nearly drained it of its wealth. Claiming the disposal of all ecclesiastical offices, he generally bestowed them on foreigners, who, by his permission, received the profits without residing in the kingdom; while their benefices were farmed to the English, who served them for very small sums. Civil causes, when important, being brought, by contrivance, into the ecclesiastical courts, were carried to Rome, and the sums of money annually expended for these and numerous other purposes, amounted to two-thirds more than the produce of the royal treasury.

At the commencement of the fourteenth century, Popery was in full power, and rioting in immense revenues. Among its zealous and indefatigable agents were those called *monks*, from the word meaning solitary and alone; and *friars* or *brothers*, from the societies into which many were formed. Several of these orders had no settled support, and, resolving to have none, they wandered about from place to place, living on the gifts of others; hence they were called mendicant or begging friars. Pope Innocent III. was their first patron; but as at length they became troublesome from their

numbers, they were reduced to four orders, the Dominicans, the Carmelites, the Franciscans, and the Augustines. Allowed to go where they pleased, they made themselves familiar with all ranks ; and as they were regarded generally with very high veneration by the people of Europe, their influence became extensive and powerful.

At an early period, however, bishop Grosseteste animadverted with great boldness on the abuses of the popedom ; and the zeal of Bradwardine, archbishop of Canterbury, must have produced considerable results. In 1284, he denounced the Dominicans, or preaching friars, as propagating dangerous errors. In the year following, he renewed his complaints against them, and against the Franciscans. He accused the chiefs of the former of reviving heresy, censured their falsehood and malice, and charged them with calumniating his reputation ; and he earnestly inveighed against some of the errors of the latter. His humility is apparent in the following sentence from his works : " Arise, O Lord, judge thy own cause. Sustain him who undertakes to defend thy truth ; protect, strengthen, and comfort me ; for thou knowest that nowhere relying on my own strength, but

trusting in thine, I, a weak worm, attempt to maintain so great a cause." Of one who became singularly conspicuous, a more detailed account must now be given.

Richmond, in Yorkshire, placed on the declivity of a hill, arising from the Swale, by which indeed it is half encircled, commanding from many points very fine views of the river, its bold rocky banks, and the well-wooded country around, more imposing in its appearance from the ruins of its castle built on a rock above the river, and still bearing marks of its ancient grandeur and importance, is said by some to have been the birth-place of John Wycliffe; but others assert that it was a village about six miles from the town, which still bears his name.

Endowed with great penetration, and availing himself of the scholastic advantages of his time, he claimed not only the power but the right of thinking for himself, on the most important subjects, and then endeavoured to discover the true sense of the word of God. No wonder that the Spirit of truth became his guide. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly."

A successful controversy on behalf of the

University of Oxford, first raised him to public notice. It secured also his election to the mastership of Baliol College, and his after success in defending the king and parliament by his unanswerable writings, and against the papal usurpation, diffused his fame at court and throughout the country. Wide, indeed, was its range when the king, the parliament, and every disinterested subject in the realm, offered him their tribute. Like others afterwards engaged in the same cause, he appears to have advanced with an honest and intrepid spirit, not clearly seeing the point he was destined to reach. He began by resisting innovation, but led on to diligent and persevering inquiry, he arrived at the conviction that the pope was the "man of sin" foretold by the apostles. This he declared in 1372.

Preferred to the divinity professor's chair at Oxford, he had a favourable opportunity for avowing his sentiments. Satisfied by a long course of investigation that the Romish church was full of error and superstition ; that it violated the sacred Scriptures and the rights of conscience ; and that it was promoted by usurpation, imposture, and cruelty, he entered faithfully on its exposure. Especially did he

dwell on the errors and iniquities of monasteries. He declared that a regard for religion was not to be expected from such men as the clergy of that time, whose only object was the advancement of their order. In every age, he affirmed, they had invented and applied whatever tended to gratify their avarice, while they bound men to observe their traditions, instead of the word of our Lord and Saviour.

He proceeded to an attack on the court of Rome. He assailed the pope for his pretended infallibility, pride, avarice, and tyranny. He openly called him antichrist. He declaimed against the pomp and luxury of the bishops, and displayed in all his movements pre-eminent courage and ability.

Amidst his labours and persecutions, Wycliffe was attacked by sickness. At Oxford, he was confined to his chamber, and reports were circulated that his death was at hand. A favourable opportunity was therefore considered by the mendicants to have arrived for obtaining a recantation of his charges against them, and it was improved without delay. A doctor from each of the prevailing orders, accompanied by some of the civic authorities, entered the chamber of the reformer. At first, they offered to



him their sympathy, and expressed their hope that he would recover. It was then insinuated that as he must be aware of their wrongs—wronges done by his sermons and writings, and that, as death appeared to be approaching, he must feel compunction for the past, they hoped that all his accusations against them would be explicitly recalled.

With perfect calmness did Wycliffe in his sufferings listen to their appeal. Whether it might have been anticipated by him or not, he had no doubt of its character and design. The sentiments he had avowed, so far from loosening, had taken a renewed hold upon his mind. The feelings he had cherished were, according to his deliberate convictions, amply justified. As soon as the address of his visitors was concluded, he intimated his wish that his attendants would raise him in his bed ; then, fixing his eyes on the mendicants, and summoning all his strength, he exclaimed, with a loud voice, "I shall not die, but live ; and shall again declare the evil deeds of the friars !" Disappointed and appalled at this reply, the doctors and their civic attendants looked confusedly at each other, and hurried away. Soon did they find the prediction of the reformer fulfilled, uttered as

it was in circumstances singularly characteristic of the parties present, and of the times in which they occurred.

Hitherto but little had been done to put the people into possession of the inspired word of God. The first attempt to translate any complete portion of the Scriptures into English, subsequent to the conquest, appears to have been a rhyming paraphrase on the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, intitled "Ormulum." A huge volume, bearing the name of "Salus Animæ," or, in the English of the time, "Sowle Hele," a legendary and Scriptural history in verse, is of nearly the same date. In Benet College, Cambridge, there is another work of the same description, belonging, it is supposed, to the thirteenth century, containing accounts of the principal events recorded in the books of Genesis and Exodus. In the same collection, there is also a copy of the Psalms in English metre, which is attributed to about the year 1300; and two similar works, of nearly the same antiquity, are extant, one in the Bodleian library, the other in that of sir Robert Cotton.\*

But it was not till the middle of the following

\* Baber's Hist. Acct. lxii.—lxv

century that we discover any attempt to produce a literal translation, even of detached portions of the Scriptures. Richard Roll, better known to antiquarians as "the hermit of Hampole," engaged in a work of this kind about the year 1350. He produced, however, little more than half the book of Psalms, and he annexed a devotional commentary to those he translated. Some zealous men among the clergy, his contemporaries, produced translations of such passages of Scripture as were prominent in the offices of the church, while others ventured to complete separate versions of the Gospels or Epistles. Some portions of the labours of this honourable few have descended to us ; the versions, which are of various merit, are generally guarded by a comment.

On the memory of Wycliffe rests the distinguished honour of translating all the books of the Old and New Testament from Latin into English. It was a noble thought, and his mind was the first of our Saxon race who received it. His object was that the highest and the lowest of the people might alike read the Bible in their own tongue, and that it might be to all the supreme and ultimate standard of faith and practice ; thus anticipating the memorable

declaration of Chillingworth, "The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants."

That his translation of the Scriptures was exceedingly offensive to the Romish ecclesiastics may be gathered from the language of Knighton, a canon of Leicester: "Christ delivered his gospel to the clergy and-doctors of the church, that they might administer it to the laity, and to weaker persons, according to the state of the times, and the wants of man. But this master John Wycliffe translated it out of Latin into English, and thus laid it more open to the laity, and to women who could read, than it had formerly been to the most learned of the clergy, even to those of them who had the best understanding. And in this way the gospel pearl is cast abroad, and trodden under foot of swine, and that which was before precious, both to clergy and laity, is rendered, as it were, the common jest of both! The jewel of the church is turned into the sport of the people, and what was hitherto the principal gift of the clergy and divines, is made for ever common to the laity." Who that thinks aright will not feel that there was cause for joy and thankfulness in that which

Knighton deplored? The "engrafted word" is "able to save the soul."

It has been denied by some Romanist writers, that there was any originality in the purpose of Wycliffe to translate the Scriptures into the vernacular tongue. If credit is to be enjoyed, they would eagerly seize it for their own party. But their pretences in this instance are opposed by indubitable facts. Walden, one of the antagonists of Wycliffe, declared that "the decrees of bishops in the church are of greater authority and dignity than is the authority of the Scriptures;"\* and the English clergy, assembled in council, in 1408, and under the presidency of archbishop Arundel, issued the enactment: "The translation of the Holy Scriptures out of one tongue into another is a dangerous thing, as St. Jerome testifies, because it is not easy to make the verse in all respects the same. Therefore, we enact and ordain, that no one henceforth do, by his own authority, translate any text of the Holy Scriptures into the English tongue, or any other, by way of book or treatise; nor let any such book or treatise, now lately composed in the time of John Wycliffe, aforesaid, or

\* Doc. Trial, lib. ii. c. 21.

since, or hereafter to be composed, be read in whole, or in part, in public, or in private, under the pain of the greater excommunication." \*

To the clamours of his antagonists Wycliffe promptly and impressively replied. Thus he writes, in one of his earliest vindications: "It has been said, in a former looking-glass for secular lords, written in the vulgar tongue, that they ought wholly to regulate themselves conformably to the law of Christ. Nor are these heretics to be heard who fancy that seculars ought not to know the law of God, but that it is sufficient for them to know that the priests and prelates tell them by word of mouth; for the Scripture is the faith of the church, and the more it is known in an orthodox sense the better; therefore, as secular men ought to know the faith, the Divine word is to be taught them in whatever language is best known to them. The truth of the faith is clearer and more exact in the Scripture than the priests know how to express it; and, if one may say so, there are many prelates who are ignorant of Scripture, and others who conceal things contained therein. It seems useful,

\* Wilkins's Concilia, iii. 317.

therefore, that the faithful should themselves search and discover the sense of the faith, by having the Scripture in a language they know and understand. Christ and his apostles converted men by making known to them the Scriptures in that language which was familiar to them. Why, then, ought not the modern disciples of Christ to collect fragments from the loaf; and, as they did, clearly open the Scriptures to the people that they may know them? The apostle teaches, that we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and be answerable for all the goods entrusted to us; it is necessary, therefore, that the faithful should know these goods, and the use of them, that they may give a proper answer. The answer by a prelate or an attorney will not then avail, but every one must answer in his own person." \*

The opposition of the clergy was, however, so great, that a bill was introduced to the House of Lords by the prelates for suppressing Wycliffe's translation. It was then that the duke of Lancaster made the bold and memorable declaration: "We will not be the dregs of all, seeing that other nations have the law of

\* *Speculum Secularium Dominorum.*

God, which is the law of our faith, written in their own language." Nor did he refrain from saying, "that he would maintain the possession of the Divine law in the tongue of the people, whosoever were the promoters of the measure." Others sympathised with him, and the bill was rejected.

Wycliffe continued to labour in the cause in which he was engaged, in various ways. Milton has described his sermons as "a light, at which succeeding reformers lighted their tapers." Many and various were his other writings. One, "The Path to Knowledge," is an exhortation to all, whether old or young, to study the Scriptures diligently, especially the New Testament, which is, he says, "full of authority, and gives understanding to the simple, especially in all points needful to salvation."

It is worthy of remark, that at this period the Bible was very costly. It appears from a register in 1429, that its price was two pounds sixteen shillings and eight pence, equal to more than twenty pounds of our present money; while five pounds, too little to purchase two copies, were considered sufficient for the yearly maintenance of a tradesman, a yeoman, or a curate. How gratefully should we acknow-



ledge that our lot has fallen in happier days, when *tenpence* will secure the possession of this inestimable treasure !

The labours of Wycliffe awakened the clamour of the highest ecclesiastics. Islip, then archbishop of Canterbury, took the lead, and determined to proceed against him with the utmost rigour. Wycliffe was, in consequence, deprived and silenced. But amidst these assaults, and the bulls of the pope, he was protected and his cause espoused by persons of the highest rank. Among these was John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, the son of Edward III., the brother of the Black Prince, and uncle of the youthful king Richard II.

One fact must be mentioned of extraordinary interest. The duke of Lancaster, John of Gaunt, would willingly have seen the king, his nephew, married to his daughter, by the lady Blanche ; but it was thought that the young lady was too nearly related, being the king's cousin-german, and it was wished that their sovereign should choose a queen from beyond sea, in order to gain stronger alliances. The sister of the king of Bohemia and emperor of Germany, daughter of the lately deceased emperor, Charles IV., and his

fourth wife, Elizabeth, of Pomerania, was then proposed ; and the king's tutor, sir Simon Burley, deputed to go to Germany respecting the marriage, was very favourably received. The union was not, however, immediately concluded, from the youth of the princess Anne, and the civil disturbances that occurred in England, in consequence of the insurrection of Wat Tyler.

At length existing difficulties were overcome. " She set out," according to Froissart, " on her perilous journey, attended by the duke of Saxony, his duchess, who was her aunt, and with a suitable number of knights and damsels. They came through Brabant to Brussels, where the duke Wenceslaus and his duchess received the young queen and her company very grandly." Alarmed at the rumoured ravages of the Norman cruisers, she tarried with her uncle and aunt more than a month, until her near relative, Charles v., remanded them into port, " solely," he said, " out of love to his cousin Anne, and out of no regard or consideration for the king of England." She passed in state from Brussels to Calais, encountered a storm on her passage to Dover, and on " the twentieth day after Christmas" was married to

Richard II., in the chapel royal of the palace of Westminster, the newly erected chapel of St. Stephen.

Some days after the royal marriage, the king and queen returned from the country to London, and the coronation of Anne took place with great splendour. At her earnest request, a general pardon was granted by the king. There was, indeed, a great necessity for such a respite, as the executions since Tyler's insurrection were numerous beyond precedent. The royal bride obtained for her mediation the title of "the good queen Anne;" and years, so far from impairing her popularity, only increased the esteem in which the people held this benevolent princess. Wycliffe was required, indeed, to appear at Lambeth, and he obeyed the summons. But, on the appointed day, an unlooked-for messenger waited on the episcopal conclave, over which the archbishop presided. It was a gentleman courtier, commanding them not to proceed to any definite sentence against Wycliffe. His authority was John of Gaunt; the bishops were struck with a panic, the proceeding was dropped, and the heavy punishment that would doubtless have been inflicted was entirely averted.

The nation had now begun to awake to a sense of its bondage. The opinions of Wycliffe, widely diffused, were the chief cause of making the people conscious of the iron yoke. The ruling powers shared this feeling. The sovereign of England had withdrawn the tribute, so long paid to Rome by his predecessors. The menaces of the pope excited no apprehensions in his mind. He laid the affair before parliament, who decided that such payment was illegal, and a surrender of national right ; and most strenuously did they advise a resistance of papal usurpation.

Articles of accusation were, however, dispatched to Rome against Wycliffe, and the pope engaged in their prosecution with the greatest alacrity. Five bulls were now issued. But such missiles had lost much of their former power. The bishops were disposed to render profound homage to the pope. Courtney, the bishop of London, was especially jealous of his dignity. Wycliffe was, therefore, summoned before the synod of St. Paul's Cathedral, but he was accompanied by the duke of Lancaster and other persons of distinction. He became, in consequence, merely a spectator of the quarrel between the nobles

and the prelates, and left the scene of contention not only unharmed, but without censure.

The adversaries of Wycliffe, zealous as they were, were not able to accomplish their designs, for the times were exceedingly unfavourable. A violent contention had arisen, as to the proper holder of the pontificate. Rival claimants to its power appeared, and according to Platina, the Romish historian, it was the period of "the schism of all schisms the worst, and the most puzzling." The attention of the leaders of the people of England was also absorbed by the political distractions of the period, and to these circumstances, together with the patronage of Wycliffe by distinguished persons, must be traced, instrumentally, his freedom from the hand of violence.

Courtney, at that time archbishop of Canterbury, at last employed means to silence his formidable opponent, who was no less the enemy of all unrighteousness. He obtained a king's patent to arrest and imprison all who should publicly or privately maintain truths which he stigmatized as heresies. Wycliffe, condemned by the council of Lambeth in 1382, had the secret protection of Anne extended.

to him. In defending him from the malice of Courtney, she was aided by her mother-in-law, Joanna, princess of Wales, who was considered a convert of the reformer, who had been introduced to her by the duke of Lancaster. Wycliffe, therefore, withdrew to his parsonage at Lutterworth, a few miles from the city of Leicester. While attending divine service in the church of that town, at the close of December, 1384, he was seized for the second time with palsy. That stroke was fatal; he never spoke again; his toils and sufferings on earth were exchanged for the bright crown of heaven.

At Lutterworth, there are still some memorials of this eminent man. The chair in which he often sat, the chasibule—the Romish garment—he once wore as a priest of that church, and the pulpit in which he preached, bearing on its rudely smoothed exterior the marks of a distant age, may still be seen. Nor will the visitor to whose heart the principles of Protestantism are dear, fail to notice the monument lately raised to his memory in the same church.

In the reign of Richard II. three of the followers of Wycliffe were obliged to do penance under the most degrading circum-

stances, not a few suffered imprisonment, but it does not appear that any were actually put to death. The influence of queen Anne and of the duke of Lancaster may have been sufficient to prevent martyrdom. At his death there was increased rigour, and all who dared to read the Scriptures in their own tongue were visited with severe punishment.

In reference to the faith of Abel it was said by an inspired apostle, "He being dead, yet speaketh;" and certain it is that the voice of Wycliffe was heard from the grave, while his influence became widely extended. "If you met two persons on the road," remarks a writer of that period, "you might be sure one of them was a follower of Wycliffe." Great was the number of converts, "especially among men of rank and learning." The writings of the reformer, and his translation of the Scriptures, were circulated throughout the land, and every part of Christendom. Esteemed as "more precious than gold" by multitudes at home and abroad, who were longing to be freed from Romish tyranny, almost innumerable copies were transcribed, and thus became dispersed among many nations.

The followers of Wycliffe were called, in re-

proach, Lollards, a name which was probably derived from the German word *lollen*, signifying psalm-singers. That they were people of evangelical piety is manifest from the tribute borne to them even by Reinher, who was a Romish inquisitor. He says : "The disciples of Wycliffe are men of a serious, modest deportment, avoiding all ostentation in dress, mixing little with the busy world, and complaining of the debauchery of mankind. They maintain themselves wholly by their own labour, and utterly despise wealth, being fully content with bare necessities. They follow no traffic, because it is attended with so much lying, swearing, and cheating. They are chaste and temperate ; are never seen in taverns, or amused by the trifling gaieties of life. You find them always employed, either learning or teaching. They are concise and devout in their prayers, blaming an unanimated prolixity. They never swear, speak little, and in their public preaching lay their chief stress on charity. They never mind canonical hours, because, they say, that a paternoster or two, repeated with devotion, is better than tedious hours spent without devotion. They explain the Scriptures in a different way from the holy



doctors and church of Rome. They speak little, and humbly, and are well-behaved in appearance."

How characteristic is this declaration ! Here were persons who felt that God is a Spirit, and requires to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, who lived soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world ; and yet, as " they explained the Scriptures in a different way from the holy doctors and church of Rome," seeking the aid of that Holy Spirit by whose inspiration they were given, they were, in the estimation of Reinher, *heretics*, deserving virulent reproach and bitter persecution, and doomed to eternal perdition ! Such is the spirit of Popery in all ages.

Richard II. was deposed in the year 1399 by Henry of Lancaster. The new sovereign was the son of John of Gaunt, the kind and faithful patron of Wycliffe. But, unlike his father, he was no sooner seated on the throne than he encouraged the ecclesiastics in their iniquitous and cruel course. The suppression of Lollardism was constantly kept in view, and persecutions were general throughout the kingdom. Now, for the first time in England, martyrs were burned alive for opposing the

abominations of Popery. From that period, during a hundred and fifty years, many followers of Christ had "trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments," and others counted not their lives dear unto them, "having respect unto the recompense of the reward."

In the year 1413, Henry iv. died, and was succeeded by his son Henry v. At this time, sir John Oldcastle, lord Cobham, had become peculiarly conspicuous. In early life, he was a soldier; he might have fought under John of Gaunt, in the time of Edward iii.; but that his conduct as a military man was highly commendable is abundantly proved. As one of the bosom companions of the prince of Wales, his youth was spent in dissipation. Of a bold and ardent temperament, impatient of control and reckless of consequences, he pursued his thoughtless career, without caring for the morrow or the opinion of his contemporaries. He has been confounded with the Falstaff of Shakespeare, but that writer explicitly states that he was not the man, and the error is to be traced to a device of his enemies. At length, he entered on a new career. The efforts of John of Gaunt might have impressed him

favourably in reference to Wycliffe, but certain it is that the doctrines of the Reformation obtained a profound influence on his mind, and he became in consequence an altered man. He felt the vanity and sinfulness of the pleasures in which he had been accustomed to indulge ; he received the truths which our Lord proclaimed to a perishing world ; and, "justified by faith," he had "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

As a member of parliament, he freely expressed his opinions in reference to the clergy, whose luxury and indolence he appears to have deplored before he was anxious to vindicate religion from their false teaching. The time for doing so was in some respects favourable. The labours of Wycliffe aroused him gradually to the reception of truth, and he acquired clearer views and stronger convictions. Not that he was equal in real enlightenment to some that succeeded him ; they had advantages which he did not enjoy. But he was one of those who have continued till now, and will to the end of the world, who maintain as the corner-stone of the Christian system, the doctrine of reconciliation to God through faith in the atoning sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour.

Anxious for his own spiritual welfare, he zealously sought the salvation of others. He caused the writings of Wycliffe to be copied and widely dispersed; he supported three itinerant preachers in different parts of the country; and thus, in various ways, contributed to the spread of Divine truth.

In the face of impending danger, and at the risk of the loss of liberty and life, lord Cobham called on the legislature to check the usurpation and cruelty of ecclesiastics. But his appeals were fruitless. As he was a favourite of the sovereign and the people, his enemies proceeded cautiously yet determinately. One of the writings of Wycliffe, possessed by lord Cobham, was read before the king, who declared that he had never heard such heresy, and consented to their proceeding against him. He wished, however, first to try his own powers of persuasion, but on urging this nobleman to submit to "his mother, the holy church, and as an obedient child to acknowledge himself in fault," he promptly replied, "You must understand, prince, I am always ready to obey you, as you are the appointed minister of God, bearing the sword for the punishment of evil doers. But as touching the pope and his spirituality, I

owe them neither suit nor service, as I know him by the Scriptures to be the great anti-christ, the son of perdition, the open adversary of God, and the abomination standing in the holy place." The king would hear no more, and the interview ended.

Violent measures were now taken, and throughout the various examinations that followed, lord Cobham conducted himself with the greatest serenity, undaunted courage, and ardent zeal for the truth. Consigned to the tower, his execution was delayed, and availing himself of an opportunity to escape, he fled into Wales, and remained there four years. Towards the close of the year 1417, he was apprehended in the principality, sent as a prisoner to London, and, dreadful to relate, he was dragged on a hurdle to St. Giles' fields, hung alive in chains upon a gallows, and slowly burned to death by a fire beneath, "praising the name of God," says Fox, "so long as his life lasted."

'There were other victims of the papal power—

"Who lived unknown,  
Till persecution dragged them into fame,  
And chased them up to heaven."

Chicheley, archbishop of Canterbury, was a more violent persecutor than his predecessor Arundel. A law was passed, by his influence, in 1415, enacting that the chancellor, judges, justices, mayors, sheriffs, and all other magistrates, should, on admission to their offices, make oath that they would do everything in their power to extirpate the Lollards out of the kingdom, and assist the ecclesiastical authorities in persecuting these followers of Christ.

In Scotland, to which we have seen the Culdees introduced the gospel, there were at this time followers of Wycliffe, and doubtless they experienced similar treatment. In the records of Glasgow, Knox found mention of James Risby, an Englishman, a disciple of Wycliffe, who was burned in 1422, for saying that the pope was not the vicar of Christ. A few years after, Paul Craw, a Bohemian, was convicted of holding heretical opinions, and consigned to the flames. "And to declare themselves," says Knox, "to be the generation of Satan, who from the beginning hath been an enemy to the truth, and desiring to hide the same from the knowledge of men, they put a ball of brass in his mouth, that he should not give confession of his faith to the people ; nor should they under-

stand the defence which he had against their unjust accusation and condemnation." Thirty persons, called "the Lollards of Kyle," a district of Ayrshire, were accused of various heresies before the king and his council, by Blacater, archbishop of Glasgow; but their accuser died shortly after, while on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and the small number of the faithful appear to have had a respite for nearly thirty years.

## CHAPTER V.

Bohemia—Wycliffe's works introduced—John Huss—Diffusion of his doctrines—Council of Constance—Huss a martyr—Jerome of Prague persecuted and put to death—Crimes, trial, and sentence of John XXIII.

AGAIN the scene of our narrative changes to Bohemia, the most inland country of Germany, consisting of an extensive plain, completely inclosed by a ring of mountains, some of which tower aloft to the height of more than 5,000 feet. From the Fichtelgebirge—the pine mountains near the western extremity—issues the chain called the Erzgebirge; these mountains run north-east, forming the boundary between Bohemia and Saxony, to the left bank of the Elbe. From the right bank of that river, east and south-east, forming in part the frontier against Prussia, runs a series of chains, the loftiest eminence of which is called the Snow-cap.

It is stated by Fox, the martyrologist, that



two Bohemians, who attended queen Anne, first introduced the works of Wycliffe to some of their countrymen. Count Valerian Krassinski confirms this assertion from the History of Poland.

One result was very remarkable. A native of Bohemia, named John Huss, secured for himself distinction in the University of Prague, to which the learned resorted from all parts of Europe. It acknowledged that "from his infancy he was of such excellent morals, that during his stay here, we may venture to challenge any one to produce a single fault against him." Subsequently appointed minister of the chapel in that city, he entered on his work with zeal, but the opportunity he now obtained of perusing the writings of Wycliffe he was accustomed to describe as the happiest circumstance of his life. Not only in the pulpit, but in the schools, he inveighed against the enormous evils that prevailed, and, in consequence of the notorious corruption of the clergy, excited considerable attention. His disciples soon became numerous, and he was followed by many members of the university.

In 1398, he was selected by queen Sophia, of Bavaria, the wife of king Wenceslaus, as her

confessor. As the monarch had been degraded from the imperial dignity, he tolerated the movement that now arose, as distasteful to his enemies, while his queen gave it all the aid she could render. As the mind of Huss obtained increased light, he exposed existing evils more boldly and zealously; and not only were the students and citizens eager to listen to his voice, but the nobility and the court crowded to hear a man whose name resounded throughout the German empire.

A new impulse was thus given to the moral power already in operation. The works of Wycliffe were translated into the Slavonian tongue, and read attentively throughout Bohemia. Aware of this, Alexander v., as soon as he was seated on the papal chair, issued a bull, commanding the archbishop of Prague to collect the writings of the reformer, and seize and imprison his adherents. The same spirit was displayed by the succeeding pope, John xxiii.; and after various appeals Huss was excommunicated, with all his friends and followers.

The persecution he endured increased his popularity, and multitudes of all ranks espoused his cause. Prohibited, therefore, from

preaching, he laboured assiduously in private instruction, and thus cast around with a liberal hand the vital seeds of Divine truth. Other means against him were now tried, but they could neither impair his energy nor chill his ardour, and his own writings, like those of his father in the faith, became numerous, both as letters and discourses.

At length some restrictions were removed, the Hussites were permitted to continue their sermons, and the reformer left his retirement and returned to Prague. He now declaimed against the bulls of the pope, who directed a crusade against the king of Naples, and offered certain benefits to all who engaged in the enterprise. As the people favoured the opinions of Huss, they were imprisoned and persecuted; a massacre also ensued, but through the whole Huss exhibited a spirit truly Christian.

Returning to his native place, he was protected by the principal persons of the country. Some of the most distressed repaired to him to obtain his advice. In this retreat he published several of his treatises, which, exciting much opposition, he promptly and vigorously defended. On his subsequent removal to Prague, he engaged in other labours. Fully did he obey

the charge, "Be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

At this period, difficulties that had long oppressed the papacy had greatly increased. From 1305 to 1377 the popes had resided at Avignon, but in 1378 Gregory XI. removed the seat of authority back to Rome. After his death, the French and Italian cardinals could not agree in a successor; each party, therefore, chose its own candidate, and a schism arose, already alluded to, which lasted forty years. On the emperor Sigismund ascending the throne in 1411, there were actually three popes: Balthazar Cossa, called John XXIII., was at Rome; Angelo Corario, named Gregory XII., was at Rimini; and Peter de Lune, styled Benedict XIII., was at Arragon; each of whom claimed to be infallible, and poured out his anathemas on the other two. The doctrines of Huss were, in the mean time, diffused, and to put a stop to these disorders, Sigismund, according to the jocose saying of Maximilian I., "acted the part of beadle to the Roman empire," and personally visited France, Italy, Spain, and England, to summon a general council.

This ecclesiastical assembly was duly convened at Constance, and consisted of the em-

peror, the pope, twenty princes, one hundred and forty counts, twenty cardinals, seven patriarchs, twenty archbishops, ninety-one bishops, six hundred other clerical dignitaries, and about four thousand priests. Various were the acts in which the council engaged, but the wishes of the emperor as to a new state of things were not gratified.

The council ordered the remains of Wycliffe to be dug up, and cast forth from consecrated ground. Some years, however, elapsed before this was done. At length, by the command of the pope, his bones were burned to ashes, and these were scattered in the neighbouring stream. But, though Wycliffe was dead, truth retained its vitality, and was afterwards widely diffused. As Fuller says, "The Swift conveyed his ashes to the Avon, the Avon into the Severn, the Severn into the narrow seas, and they wafted them into the main ocean; and thus the ashes of Wycliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which is now being diffused throughout the earth."

As, too, the rage of the council was hurled against Huss and his followers, he travelled to Constance, resolving to defend the principles he had avowed. During a journey of three weeks,

he was received by the people with warm acclamations. On his arrival, he was immediately examined before the pope and the cardinals, and though assured by the pope of his liberty, he was suddenly seized by a party of guards in the gallery of the council. The pontiff, on witnessing so perfidious an act, could only say, "It was that of the cardinals."

A prison was now found for Huss in a lonely Franciscan monastery, on the banks of the Rhine. During his long confinement, he composed some interesting tracts. Even members of the Romish church generously interceded for his acquittal, but in vain. At length his trial took place; he was advised to abjure his books and recant, and on his stedfast refusal, the order was issued that he should be degraded from the priesthood, that his books should be publicly burned, and that he should be delivered over to the secular power. With perfect serenity he heard the sentence. One petition that he immediately presented was a supplication for his enemies.

They proceeded then to the execution of the sentence; and first they degraded him from his office as a priest. For this purpose, the archbishop of Milan, and six other bishops, led

him to a table, on which lay the priestly habits, with which they invested him, as if he were about to perform mass. When the *alb*, the white surplice, was put on him, he said, "My Lord Jesus Christ was also clothed in a white robe by Herod, and sent by him to Pilate." As soon as he was fully clad in the priestly vestments, the bishops once more exhorted him to save his life by recanting his errors, while yet an opportunity was afforded him ; but Huss, addressing the people from the scaffold to which he had been conducted, cried out, with great emotion, the tears flowing from his eyes, "These bishops are exhorting me to retract my errors! If the only consequence were the reproach of man, I might easily be persuaded ; but I am now in the presence of my God, and I cannot yield to them without wounding my conscience, and blaspheming my Lord, who is in heaven ; for I have always taught, written, and preached the doctrines of which they now accuse me. How could I dare to lift my eyes in heaven, if I were to make such a recantation? How could I ever meet the multitude of persons I have instructed, if I should now impeach those doctrines which I have taught them, and which

they have received as eternal truths ? Shall I cause them to stumble by an example so base ? No, I will not do it ; I will not value my body, which must at all events die, more than the everlasting salvation of those whom I have instructed." On this the bishops and all the clergy exclaimed, " Now we see his obstinacy and malice in his heresy ;" and he was ordered immediately to descend from the scaffold.

When he had come down, the bishops commenced the ceremonies of degradation. The archbishop of Milan and the bishop of Besançon approached him, and took the cup from his hands, saying, " Accursed Judas, who hast forsaken the counsel of peace, and allied thyself with the Jews. Behold, we take from thee the cup in which the blood of Christ is offered for the salvation of the world ; thou art no longer worthy of it." Huss replied with a loud voice, " I place all my hope and confidence in God my Saviour. I know he will never take from me the cup of salvation, but that by his grace I shall drink it to-day in his kingdom." The other bishops then came forward, and taking from him, one after another, some part of the sacerdotal vestments, they each pronounced a different malediction. Huss answered, " Most



gladly do I endure all this reproach for the love of the truth, and the name of my Lord Jesus Christ."

It only now remained to deprive him of the tonsure—a circle from which the hair is cut from the crown of the head, and enlarged in size as the person rises in ecclesiastical dignity. Here a violent dispute arose among the bishops, whether they should use the razor or the scissors for this purpose. Huss could not refrain from turning to the emperor, and saying, "Is it not strange, that, cruel as they all are, they cannot agree as to the mode of exercising their cruelty?" After a long debate, they declared for the scissors, and with them they cut off the hair in the form of a cross. They also scraped the nails of his fingers with a knife, to take from him the holy oil, and to erase the pretended characters of the priesthood.

When the ceremony of degradation was finished, the bishops cried out, "The holy council of Constance expels John Huss from the priesthood, and the sacred office with which he was invested, and thus declares that the holy church of God separates herself from this man, and delivers him over to the secular power."

Before proceeding further, however, they put on his head a paper mitre, about two feet high, on which were painted three devils, and an inscription in large characters, *Heresiarch*, "Arch-heretic." Huss, on seeing it, comforted himself with these words, "My Lord Jesus bore for me, a poor sinner, a much more painful crown of thorns, and even the ignominious death of the cross. Therefore, for his sake, I shall most cheerfully bear this, which is much easier." Then the bishops cried aloud, "Now we deliver up your soul to Satan, and to hell." "But I," said Huss, "commit my soul to my gracious Lord Jesus Christ." The bishops then turning to the emperor, said, "The holy council of Constance now delivers up to judgment, and to the secular arm, John Huss, who no longer sustains any office in the church."

When he arrived at the place of execution, he fell on his knees, lifted up his eyes to heaven, and prayed aloud, in language taken from the 31st and 51st Psalms, repeating with great emphasis this verse, "Into thine hand I commend my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." While he was at prayer, the paper mitre having fallen from his

head, he looked at it smiling, on which some of the guards around him said, "Put it on again ; let him be burned with the devils, the masters he has served." Huss began to pray again, "Lord Jesus, I cheerfully suffer this terrible and cruel death, for the sake of thy holy gospel, and the preaching of thy sacred word ; do thou forgive my enemies the crime they are committing." On this the executioners, by order of the count palatine, made him cease, and compelled him to walk three times round the pile. He then requested permission to speak with his jailers ; and when they were come, he said, "I thank you, most heartily, my friends, for all the kindness you have shown me, for you have behaved to me more as brethren than as keepers. Know also, that my trust in my Saviour is unshaken, for whose name I willingly suffer this death, being assured that I shall be with him to-day in paradise."

The executioners then took him, and bound him to a stake with wet ropes. But as his face happened to be turned to the east, an honour of which some thought the heretic was unworthy, they unbound him, and turned his face towards the west. They afterwards fixed

round his neck a black, rusty chain, on which he said, smiling, " My dear Master and Saviour was bound for my sake, with a harder and heavier chain than this. Why should I, a poor sinful creature, be ashamed of thus being bound for him ? " The executioners then began to put the wood in order. They placed some bundles of light wood under his feet, and heaped straw and large wood around him up to his neck. Before they set fire to the pile, the count palatine and the marshal of the empire, De Pappenheim, exhorted him to recant his doctrines in order to save his life. Huss cried aloud from the pile, " I call God to witness that I have never taught the errors which my enemies falsely lay to my charge ; I have, in all my discourses, aimed at nothing but to deliver men from the bondage of sin : therefore I joyfully confirm, this day, by my death, the truth which I have taught and preached."

The pile was then lighted, but Huss began to sing and to pray aloud several times, in these words, " O Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me ! " When he afterwards endeavoured to speak again, the wind drove the flames into his face, and stopped his utterance ;

still, however, his head and his lips were observed to move, as if in prayer for a short time, when the sufferings of this faithful servant were ended, and the Lord called his soul to his eternal rest. The count palatine being informed that one of the executioner's servants had preserved Huss' cloak and girdle, ordered them to be burned, with everything belonging to him, fearing lest the Bohemians should venerate them as sacred relics. When all was consumed, the executioner put the ashes of Huss into a cart, with the earth on which he had been executed, and threw the whole into the Rhine, which flows near, that every possible trace of this holy witness for the truth might be obliterated. But it was said in an elegy, composed at the time, "His ashes will be scattered over every country ; no river, no banks will be able to retain them ; and those whom the enemy thought to silence by death, sing and publish in every place that gospel which their persecutors thought to suppress."

A sketch of a distinguished lay-reformer, Jerome of Prague, will be found strongly to resemble that just given of his eminent contemporary. After visiting the university of that city, as well as those of England, Paris, Heidelberg, and

Cologne, he became acquainted, during his residence at Oxford, with the works of Wycliffe. These he translated into his own language, and on his return to Prague avowed the same principles, and joined the followers of Huss. During the confinement of the latter, Jerome was cited before the council. Finding on his arrival that he could offer Huss no assistance, he deemed it prudent to retire, and wrote on behalf of his friend to the emperor. He was seized at Kirsan by an officer, who apprized the council of his captive, and the prisoner was ordered to be sent to Couste. Accused before the assembly, he was conveyed to a dungeon, and was afterward exposed to want and torture.

A dangerous illness now ensued; attempts were made to induce him to recant, but for a time he was not to be moved. Suffering at length unhappily prevailed; he acknowledged the errors of Waldo and Huss, and avowed his adherence to the church of Rome. But his backward course allowed him no repose, and as his own reproaches became intolerable, he renounced his retraction, and demanded a second trial. Again brought before the council, he valiantly maintained the truth.

Powerful was his defence, but it failed to affect those to whom it was addressed. Not more impervious is the rock to the sunbeams, than were their hearts to the dictates of truth and compassion. His martyrdom quickly followed. When surrounded by blazing fagots, he cried out, "O Lord God, have mercy upon me!" and a little afterwards, "Thou knowest that I have loved thy truth." With a cheerful countenance, observing the executioner about to set fire to the wood behind his back, he cried out, "Bring thy torch hither : perform thy office before my face ; had I feared death, I might have avoided it." As the wood began to blaze, he sang a hymn, which the violence of the flames did not interrupt.

The people of Bohemia, not only of humble but of high rank, who had espoused the doctrines of Huss, were greatly excited by his cruel martyrdom. A long memorial against it was signed by upwards of a hundred noblemen, and more than a thousand of the gentry. The whole nation openly declared his innocence ; while such was the attachment of his numerous friends, that they carried earth from the place of his execution into Bohemia. They also

commemorated his martyrdom by elegies, medals, and pictures, and by the observance of a service on the anniversary of his death.

In vain were protestations made to the council; its persecutions were unrelentingly continued. The followers of Huss were excommunicated; they were deprived of their churches, and money was offered to any who would apprehend them. Hundreds were in consequence shut up in deep mines; some were drowned; others were burned; but, like their leader, they were faithful unto death.

A single fact will illustrate the spirit of the persecuted. A Hussite pastor, after many sufferings, was placed on the pile, with three peasants and four children. Exhorted, for the last time, to abjure their heresies, the pastor replied, "God preserve us from it! We are ready to suffer death; not once only, but, if it were possible, a hundred times, rather than deny that Divine truth which has been so clearly revealed to us in the gospel." The pile was now lighted, when, taking the children in his arms, he joined with them in a hymn of praise, and calmly resigned his spirit.

It has been well remarked, "When the question is insultingly put by the Romanists,



‘Where was Lutheranism—where was Calvinism—where was the boasted doctrine of Cranmer, Knox, Zwingli, before the sixteenth century?’—we are ready with our reply: This doctrine was not merely in the Scriptures, but in the hearts and on the lips of a continuous succession of witnesses; it was professed by churches, taught by a series of pastors, and sealed by the blood of thousands of martyrs. ‘But these—how few they are!’ We answer, *first*, they would be many more, had not a sanguinary despotism ‘worn them out,’ from age to age, by the sword and fire; and, *secondly*, they doubtless were, in every age, many more than can be fully ascertained, inasmuch as their triumphant enemies have used every means of fraud and calumny to distort, or to expunge from the page of history, the evidence whence the extent of their own horrid malice might have been learned by posterity.”\*

If, however, the disciples of Christ were called to suffer for his great name’s sake, the day of retribution came to one of his determined enemies. John xxiii. proceeded towards Constance in all the pomp of his power, but his carriage was overturned on one of the mountains

\* “Natural History of Enthusiasm.”

of the 'Tyrol, within sight of the city. Considering this accident as a most unlucky omen, he passionately exclaimed, on getting up, "By the power of Satan behold me fallen! Why did I not remain quietly at Bologna?" And then, looking down on the city, he added, "I see how it is: that is the pit in which the foxes are snared."

At the opening of the council, and during the celebration of mass by the pope, the emperor, according to custom, and attired as a deacon, read the Gospel. As John heard the words, "There went out a decree from the emperor Augustus," he became pale and trembled. Sigismund ascended the throne, which had been erected in the church, with his empress on his right hand, and the electors of Brandenburg and Saxony, bearing the sword and sceptre, on each side. John now presented a sword to the emperor, urging him to use it in defence of the council—the last act of his wicked and wretched pontificate.

The struggle between the rival popes and the emperor had now reached its height. Gregory XII. had professed himself willing to resign, provided the other two did the same; but protesting against John XXIII. being per-

mitted to preside at the council. The long-continued dispute was, however, to be terminated in another way.

John seems, if possible, to have exceeded all his predecessors in enormity. He moved in an extensive sphere of action, and discovered throughout his career the deepest depravity. So notorious was his atrocity, that the council of Constance appointed a commission to examine his conduct. Thirty-seven witnesses were examined on only one part of the imputations. All of these were men of probity and intelligence, and many bishops and doctors in theology and law. He was, therefore, convicted on the best authority, and indeed acknowledged his own criminality.

As to faith—he was convicted of schism, heresy, deism, infidelity, heathenism, and profanity. As to morality—the list of allegations contained seventy particulars, but twenty were suppressed for the honour of the popedom. “The accusations,” says Niem, “contained all mortal sins, and an infinity of abominations.” Such was the pontiff who, according to the Florentine council, was “the vicar-general of God, the head of the church, and the father and teacher of all Christians!” But all these

accusations were severally adopted by the council of Constance, and were duly signed by the cardinals themselves.

Three bishops now took possession of his person, and most abject was the submission of the guilty and miserable man. But this did not avail: the emperor urged on the proceedings against him; he was deposed, his seal was broken, and his armorial bearings effaced. He was succeeded by Otho de Colonna, under the title of Martin v. Windech, a counsellor of the time, said emphatically, "Otho de Colonna was the poorest and most modest of cardinals; but Martin v. became the wealthiest and most grasping of popes!" One act is sufficiently illustrative of his real character. He raised John, notwithstanding all his atrocities, and his consequent deposition, to the office of a cardinal, and treated him with the same honour and respect as the rest of the college. What a contrast have we here beheld! John, with all his atrocities, was elevated to a rank second only to that of the pontificate, and then was interred with honour in the church of St. John; while Huss and Jerome were, notwithstanding their holiness, tried without justice, and burned without mercy, by a council claiming to be infallible!

## CHAPTER VI.

The Netherlands—Origin of Brotherhoods—The Beguines—Gerhard Groot—Johan Pupper, or Von Goch—His opposition to corrupt Christianity—Gregory of Heimburg—Ruckrath of Wessalia—John Wessel—The Reformation in Poland.

IN tracing the movements that took place in lands not yet adverted to, it is important to remark, that towards the close of the fourteenth century institutions were in existence, bearing the name of "*fratres communis vitæ*"—brotherhoods, in fact, possessing all things in common.

They originated in the Netherlands, forming part of the great plain of Europe, and not separated from Germany on the north-east by any natural boundaries. They form one unbroken flat, without a hill or rock, and having no forests or running waters ; they lie in part even below the level of the sea, against the inroads of which they are protected, partly by immense dikes, and partly by sand-hills, which have been cast up by the ocean, and running parallel

with the coast, protect it against the element to which they owe their origin.

Prior to the formation of the institutions just mentioned, communities had been formed, consisting entirely of the ladies of the nobility and gentry of the country, who had perished in the Crusades. They bore the name of *Beguines*, or praying women. At a subsequent period, an association of men, called *Beghards*, or praying men, was formed. They were very numerous at Cologne, and they spread from thence over the whole of Germany. Numbers of persons in this country, and also in France, had become deeply impressed with the importance of salvation, and firmly persuaded of the necessity of something very different from the doctrines set forth by the church of Rome. They seem to have sought the religion of the heart, the influence of which is evident in the life. The extreme profligacy which prevailed among all ranks led them to think of separating themselves from the mass of the people. To the convents they could not look, for these were more corrupt than the world at large. They therefore formed themselves into free communities, for the purpose of advancing personal piety, of aiding one another in their

spiritual concerns, and of promoting the advantage of others.

They appear to have originated with an eminent man, named Gerhard Groot, who was applied to by some of the scholars of a celebrated school for instruction in theology. He promptly rendered them his aid, gave them access to his library, and frequently joined them in the perusal of good books. A large influx of scholars and *protégés* now took place, and he made rules for their guidance and discipline. One of them, as he was copying, said to Gerhard, "Dear minister, what harm would there be if I and those of my friends who are transcribing with me were to lay by our weekly earnings, and have all things in common?" "All things in one?" replied Gerhard, "why it would raise the begging friars, and they would oppose it with all their might." "Well but, dear minister," rejoined the young man, "let us try at any rate. Perhaps God may cause some good to come of it." "Well then," said he, "in God's name begin, and I will be your protector against all your enemies."

The communities that thus arose and extended themselves had little or nothing in

common with the regular inmates of convents. The Brethren had no necessary connexion with the priesthood, and were seldom ordained. It does not appear that they had any vows of celibacy. A succession of such free fellowships may be traced through the whole of the middle ages, in forms more or less definite, and with some variety, both of rule and devotion, but all agreeing in their general design. Extreme simplicity marked them all. The members of these institutions lived for the most part in separate houses, though generally near to each other. They followed with diligence and self-denial some worldly occupation, which was commonly of a humble character; but this was subordinate to acts of piety and Christian kindness. The relief of the poor and the care of the sick, so frequently neglected by the multitude, received from them a constant attention.

Some system appears to have been adopted in fulfilling these labours of love. Those of Antwerp, for example, especially devoted themselves to the afflicted with contagious diseases, to those who were dying, and to the offering of the last attentions to the dead. Others took charge of different departments of benevolent



labour. These acts could not fail to awaken observation. The Brothers rose high in the esteem of the people of the countries they inhabited. They were invited by the corporate bodies of many cities to reside among them. Princes did them honour. Even popes deigned to certify that they were free from heresy. At the same time, they had bitter and implacable enemies in the mendicant friars and inquisitors, who sometimes succeeded in stirring up persecution against them.

It must also be admitted that these societies did not always preserve themselves from reproach. Their contemplative character exposed them to delusions of the imagination, and, on some occasions, they united themselves with those who entertained erroneous opinions. A conviction of the necessity of reformation accordingly arose, and the result was exceedingly beneficial. They laboured to make their example tell on those around, by reading to them out of the Scriptures, exhorting them as they had opportunity, instructing the young, and multiplying copies, by transcription, of the word of God.

Whenever one of these institutions was established, a numerous circle of scholars was

collected. They were attracted by the library, which the diligence of the Brethren in transcribing supplied, and to which the rules of the establishment gave free access. The inmates were expected to render assistance to any of the pupils who appeared to them in any difficulty, to encourage their further progress, and to diffuse knowledge in the village or city where they dwelt, by all the means in their power. The inhabitants of the Low Countries had, in consequence, far more instruction than those of any other. In the city of Amersfort the knowledge of Latin became so general, that the poorest artisans understood and spoke it, and the higher orders of the city were all Greek scholars. With the Brethren of these houses originated the Biblical theology and the classical learning of Germany. From their schools went out those men, who, as theologians and scholars, prepared a whole generation for the influence of Luther.

Other eminent individuals must be associated with this notice of Gerhard Groot. Johan Pupper (a family name little used by him) was born near the beginning of the fifteenth century, in the small village of Goch, in Cleves, and was hence, according to the custom

of the times, called Von Goch. Little is known of his early history. It would appear from his writings that he received a theological education above what was common at that time. With the Scriptures, and with the Latin fathers, particularly with Jerome and Augustine, he was familiar, as well as with the scholastic theology, more especially that of Thomas Aquinas, and of his school. He was an acute and clear-headed dialectician, and a very exact and perspicuous writer, though in elegance of style he was not above the other Latin writers of his day. He was probably educated at one of the schools of the "Brethren of the Life in Common," and at the University of Paris.

The first act by which Goch comes distinctly before us is his founding, when about fifty years of age, a priory for nuns, at Mechlin, in Brabant, in 1451. This city was under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Cambray, until 1559, when it became an independent archbishopric, and the celebrated cardinal Granvella was its first archbishop. Mechlin became very naturally the residence of many priests and monks. Beside a commandary of the Teutonic Knights, one convent of Minorites, another of Carmelites, one of Augustinian Eremites, and a house of

the Brethren of the Life in Common, there were the nunneries of the Valley of Lilies, of Mount Sion, of Bethany, of Mugzen, not to mention the female charitable societies, such as that of the Beguines, that of the Leprous Virgins, the hospital of St. Mary, and the Black Sisters, so called from their dress.

Mechlin, therefore, was pre-eminently a monastic city, in which Von Goch had ample opportunity to watch the operations and to study the nature of this branch of the ecclesiastical system. His agency in respect to monasticism was twofold—fostering it on the one hand by his external connexions, and yet withering it on the other by the severity with which he probed its vital parts. By founding the priory of Tabor, and acting for twenty-four years as a rector, he showed that he maintained a quiet existence nominally within the pale of the church ; but by profound meditation upon the true nature of Christianity, and upon the character of the church as it appeared in his age, he brought out a system, all the tendencies of which were so many elements of a genuine reformation.

In his writings, Goch appears as a Biblical theologian, striking at the root of the evils of

the scholastic theology, and of the superstitions and unscriptural practices of the time. He represents the church as having fallen into the following among other fundamental errors : “ That of giving to Christianity the legal character of Judaism ; that of a Pelagian theology, and a consequent reliance upon good works ; and that of tyrannically exacting countless forms of religion of which the apostolic church knew nothing.” The favourite doctrine of the church during the middle ages, namely, that the precepts of Christ, acting upon the spontaneous feelings of the pious heart, were insufficient for the highest attainments of religion, and that the obligation of a monastic vow needed to be superadded, was elaborately refuted by this able theologian. “ This,” said he, “ is the error of our times—an error which shows itself to be kindred in various respects with that of Pelagianism. The latter declares that the grace of God is not indispensably necessary to spiritual acts, denies that grace is of itself sufficient, and asserts that the precepts of the gospel cannot be perfectly observed without the obligation of a vow.”

Such a method, he contends, “ does not produce conformity to the Divine character. For

as God does nothing by constraint, but always acts freely according to his nature, and as intelligent creatures are distinguished from irrational brutes by their intellectual and moral freedom, it is evident that human actions are most like the Divine, and most worthy of our nature, when they are spontaneous and free." It is interesting to see what language this adult son of the church holds in regard to his spiritual mother. "The church," he observes, "is the mother of the faithful. But it often happens that the mother has more affection than judgment. Hence, in many of the things done by the church, we perceive more zeal than discretion. So it is in regard to monastic vows; for though they are not adapted to strengthen the will for any spiritual act, they were established by the church under the view that they might be the occasion of good to the weak and negligent."

It will be perceived that this was not a very flattering representation of the superiority of the monastic state. Goch was far from shrinking from the conclusion which must be drawn from such premises. He brings it out not only with logical clearness, but with strong indignation: "Nothing can be further from the truth

than the shameless boasting of the monks, when, to exalt their order, they, to their own disgrace, call it an order of perfection. They constitute the weak and faltering part of the church, who, being unable to control their inordinate desires, need outward restraints to preserve them from sin." In such declarations he conveyed to his readers undeniable, but, at the same time, most unwelcome truth.

Nor did he confine his attention to this particular corruption of Christianity. His clear vision surveyed the whole field of observation presented in the existing state of the church. Especially did his eye rest on the main pillar of the papal hierarchy. When it was asserted that the bishops alone were the successors of the apostles, he replied, " True, indeed, according to the usages and rules of the church, but not according to the original institution established by Christ and his apostles."

Thus a pious monk, deeply imbued with the spirit of primitive Christianity, not only lamented the corruptions which everywhere met his eye, but in his quiet retreat, without the least outward collision, without any attempt to summon the people to external resistance, applied his powerful mind to the work of

searching the subject to the bottom, and of presenting the results, with an irresistible array of argument. By these means it was, whether consciously or unconsciously, he prepared the way most admirably for an ultimate reformation, which should extend to all the branches of ecclesiastical organization, doctrine, and worship. To the legal and formal piety of the times he opposed freedom and spirituality; to a false trust upon good works, a reliance upon the grace of God; to the imagined sanctity of a useless monastic course, the true holiness of a life of active piety; to the unscriptural assumptions of the dignitaries of the church, the labour, self-denial, simplicity, zeal, and official equality of the primitive ministry. He died in 1475, eight years after the birth of Luther.

In the meantime, there were other men, who, from a somewhat different point of view, saw the alarming degeneracy of the church, and who raised a voice, sometimes of lamentation, and sometimes of indignant rebuke. Of this class was Gregory of Heimburg, a distinguished scholar and statesman, who was active at the council of Basle, and was an influential member of almost every German diet. He well knew,



as he said, "that it was more perilous to dispute the power of the pope, than to dispute the power of God."

Still he fearlessly spoke out in loud tones of remonstrance: "While the pontiff professes to be invested with the plenitude of the power of Christ, he knows from Christ's own word that this pretension is false. Christ did not give his disciples secular power, but taught them expressly that his kingdom was not of this world. He himself would not be an earthly king, but was subject to rulers, as were also his apostles, both in principle and practice. For three hundred years nothing was known of the papal supremacy. The Roman bishops were called, not to dominion, but to martyrdom. They gloried, not in the purple, in milk-coloured horses, in riches, splendour, and power, but in being able to say, 'So we have forsaken all, and followed thee.'" Such was the tenor of his language.

While Heimbürg was thus exposing the arrogant pretensions of the Romish bishop, calling upon the German nation "to arise and shake themselves from the dust, and break the yoke that had been laid upon their necks," Jacob of Jüterbock, a native of the very place

where Tetzel, one hundred and thirty-two years afterwards, preached indulgences, was publishing his views of the church, and his doubts as to whether it was not already corrupt beyond the power of recovery. "If a reformation be possible," said he, "it must be effected either by the direct power of God, or through the agency of man. The former is possible, indeed, but it is not the ordinary method of Providence. It will not be accomplished by any one man, for many have attempted it and failed of success. The papal court itself stands in greatest need of reformation, as all the recent councils have declared. If the pope cannot purify his own court, how can he reform the church?"

Another important character appears in Ruckrath, or John of Wessalia, a small town of Wessel, on the Rhine, between Mayence and Coblenz. He was professor of theology in Erfurt, and afterwards a distinguished preacher at Worms. About the year 1450, while at Erfurt, he wrote a treatise against indulgences, which began thus: "We read, in the four Gospels, the discourses of our Lord; in these are contained the mysteries of salvation; but we find there nothing about indulgences. Next, the apostles

preached and wrote Epistles to the churches ; neither in these is any mention made of indulgences. Then we have the works of Gregory Nazianzen, Basil, Athanasius, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine, and yet they say nothing of indulgences." In his elaborate discussions, he completely overthrew the systems proposed and defended by Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, and other scholastic writers. According to Ullmann, Wessel had proceeded further in his indulgences than Luther had done when he wrote on the same subject. His refutation of the doctrine was clearer, more comprehensive, and founded on a better understanding of the whole subject. It aimed more at the foundation of the entire system than did the bold and powerful, but occasional and partial assault of Luther.

As preacher at Worms, Wessel found himself surrounded by worldly and corrupt priests, and placed under a bishop who was a better warrior than preacher. Still he was not diverted from his course. In a work which he published on the Office and Authority of Pastors, he openly declared that the world "had fallen from a state of true piety into a kind of superstitious Judaism." Wherever he looked, he beheld

nothing but "an ostentatious display of works, a dead faith, and pharisaical pride; cold ceremonies and superstitions, not to say idolatry." "The word of the Lord," he continues, "is bound by human inventions, and cannot be freely proclaimed. A tyrannical power rises up against it on all sides; it is opposed by the teachings of the bishops, to say nothing of the legends of the saints, the fraud of indulgences, and the fury of the monks, whom one must exalt to heaven if he would live comfortably." "But," he says to his brethren, "if called to preach the truth, do not stand in fear of the anathemas and curses thundered in papal bulls—which are but paper and lead—for they throw a cold and harmless bolt. For he who excommunicates you was long ago himself excommunicated by the Supreme Judge." With a prophetic spirit he says: "I see that our souls must waste away with spiritual famine, unless a star of hope shall arise. Deliver us, O God of Israel, from all these distresses!"

Wessel regarded the Scriptures as the only guide of the Christian. He refused to accept even the interpretation of them at the hands of the church. The Bible must be its own interpreter. The fundamental doctrine taught in

the Scriptures he conceived to be that of salvation by grace. On the system of penances he remarks : " When a man makes confession, severe penance is imposed upon him. He must perform a pilgrimage to Rome, or even further ; must fast and repeat many prayers. Not so did Christ teach ; he simply said, ' Go and sin no more.' " He rejected entirely the authority of tradition. In his preaching at Worms, he used such language as the following : " I will regard that, and that only as sin, which the Scriptures declare to be so. I condemn the pope, the church, and the councils, and exalt Christ. To me their double-pointed mitres, their splendid infulas, the pearls and gold that adorn their feet, are as nothing. I can only smile at their high-sounding, heroical names, their miserable titles, and their lofty triumphs, all of which are signs of anything rather than a bishop."

When such things were justified on the ground of their antiquity, he tersely replied, " The Babylonian empire is, therefore, not good, because it has stood some few centuries. We have then," said he to his brethren, " to demand of the pope and the priests, as successors of Christ and the apostles, that they

give us the word of God. If they will feed us with that, we would listen to them as we would to Christ himself; but if they will not, we will disregard them." He complains loudly of the spiritual adulation of the times, of the "blasphemous titles, such as 'the vicar of Christ,' 'demi-god,' 'the most divine,' with which such blasphemous flatterers wag their tails before the pope, so that the ass in purple is pleased with himself, and thinks himself some great one." Of the mummeries of public worship he speaks with equal contempt: "How changed is the appearance of the church! At present it is esteemed clerical to mutter prayers coldly with the lips, without understanding them. It is regarded as something grand when the deacons bray, 'Gospel!' 'Epistle!' Mutterings and stentorian voices are employed in public worship without regard to its spirituality."

In 1479, Wessel was cited to appear before a spiritual court at Heidelberg, on abstract metaphysical questions, which had long divided two parties, called the Nominalists and the Realists. The first act of this judicial assemblage was to sit down to a sumptuous dinner at the archbishop's palace, of which judges, assessors, doctors, and witnesses against the

accused, all partook. At its close, the vast hall of the Hotel de Ville of Mayence was crowded with inquisitors, rectors, and doctors of divinity, and the proceedings were opened with many formalities. The prisoner, when ordered to be brought to the bar, was an infirm old man, with a countenance unusually pallid, and a frame suffering from a long illness and a protracted imprisonment. So weak, indeed, was he, that he could only sustain himself erectly by the help of his staff, and of two friars who stood one at each arm. But for him there was no sympathy, no compassion in that court, and he perished in the dungeons of the inquisition.

A reference to another who rendered essential service to the work of the reformation must conclude this chapter. John Wessel was born in 1419 or 1420, at Groeningen, the capital of a province of that name, in Holland. He was indebted for his education to one of the brotherhoods of the time at Zwoll. The celebrated Thomas à Kempis was residing as a brother in the neighbourhood, and it is probable that to him Wessel was specially indebted. The two, however, differed greatly in temperament and character. The chief enjoyment of the former was experienced as he sat

in his quiet cell, or walked in the garden of his convent, meditating on the love of God in Christ, or in labour to enkindle a similar flame to that which glowed in his own bosom in the hearts of others. The latter was intent upon obtaining knowledge, and with this object he acquired many languages, investigated prevailing systems, opposed what he considered erroneous, and longed to remove the corruptions that were notorious. A Kempis was of a quiet, humble spirit—Wessel had the bold and dauntless heart of the reformer.

Even in his youth he gave an earnest of his future character. While attending as an acolyte, or altar-boy, one of the usual services to the virgin Mary in the church, he is said to have asked the officiating priest, "Father, why dost thou not lead me to Christ, who so kindly calls all who are weary and heavy laden to come to him?" On another occasion, when exhorted to observe the fasts of the church, he replied, "Would God I were drunken instead with the love of God, and that I never fasted save from sin!" His free opinions when at Zwoll could not escape notice; persecution arose in consequence, and he left the place, to which he was strongly attached.



His subsequent career at the Universities of Paris and Cologne, interesting as it was, cannot now be described. Here he differed greatly from the multitude around. The earnestness and simplicity of his faith in the word of God had elevated him to a noble independence of all human authority, and to a vigour and freedom of thought that could not appear under other circumstances. With the Scriptures in his hand, he disputed against tradition, doubted the power of the pope, opposed the doctrine of merit in the works of men, and maintained that there was no hope for the sinner save in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

His Protestant tendencies showed themselves in scientific as well as ecclesiastical questions. To the assumption of mere authority he opposed his own independence and power of reasoning. It is related of Corregio that he said, on seeing a picture of Raphael's, "Raphael was an artist—so am I;" but this saying was originally Wessel's. When the authority of Thomas Aquinas was quoted against him, he uniformly replied, "Thomas was a doctor—very well, I am a doctor also. Thomas scarcely knew Latin, and knew no other language—I know the three

learned languages. Thomas had scarcely seen the ghost of Aristotle—I have read Aristotle in Greek.” That he could not act thus without creating enemies must be obvious. There were professors and tutors of colleges who saw their influence over their pupils entirely disturbed by these means. Others felt the bitter defeats they had sustained in arguments with him. The monks hated him with more intensity than all, because he exposed unsparingly their superstitions and hypocrisy, and thus their craft was in great danger.

Of his great simplicity the following is a striking instance. Pope Sixtus iv., immediately after his inauguration at Rome, told Wessel that he would grant him any request he should make. Wessel answered thus: “Holy father and kind patron, I will not press hard upon your holiness. You well know I never aimed at great things. But as you now sustain the character of the supreme pontiff and shepherd on earth, my request is, that you would so discharge the duties of your elevated situation, that your praise may correspond with your dignity, and that when the great Shepherd shall appear, whose first minister you are, he may say, ‘Well done, good and faithful

servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord :’ and, moreover, that you may be able to say boldly, ‘ Lord, thou gavest me five talents ; behold, I have gained other five talents.’ ”

The pope replied, “ That must be *my* care : but do *you* ask something for yourself.” “ Then,” rejoined Wessel, “ I beg you to give me out of the Vatican library a Greek Testament and a Hebrew Bible.” “ You shall have them,” said Sixtus : “ but, foolish man, why don’t you ask for a bishopric, or something of that sort ? ” “ For the best of reasons,” said Wessel, “ because I do not want such things.”

On returning to his native country, he pursued the course on which he had so disinterestedly and devotedly entered. About this time the arraignment of Wessel took place. Wessel heard of the trial of his friend and of his sentence, but he had remained unaccused. The inquisitors were deterred from their purpose, partly by the great reputation of Wessel, but principally because bishop David, of Burgundy, had bestowed on him especial favour. He was greatly celebrated as a physician, and had on one occasion relieved the bishop by ordering him a bath of new milk. A strong bond had subsisted between them in their mutual

love of science and literature, and their full conviction of the necessity of a reformation. One proof of this was given by the bishop in his directing all the clergy in his diocese to be subjected to an open examination as to their literary qualities, the result of which was a melancholy exposure of ignorance and incapacity. That he had serious faults is too evident, but of the last and worst period of his episcopate Wessel knew nothing ; he died six years before his patron.

Wessel continued his labours to the close of life for the benefit of others. His piety evinced itself in deep and unfeigned humility. Many passages might be extracted from his works, which express in the most touching terms the deep self-abasement of his love to God. The following may serve as an example : " What shall I return unto Him to whom I can return nothing that is not his, that I have not received from him, that he hath not given me ? Woe is me ! I dare not be unthankful, and yet it is impossible for me to make the least return. I and all that belong to me are thine, O Lord, whether I will or no. I have received them and possess them, though I cannot return them. It doth not become a saint to be unthankful ;

but how can I be thankful? Lord, I am infinitely bounden unto thee, yet in myself I am altogether poor, and can only thank thee by acknowledgment and confession, and rendering again unto thee wonder, love, praise, and sweet enjoyment of thy blessings."

The following beautiful passage also exhibits the same blessed frame of mind: "What can I give to Him who hath given me all things? The violet sheds its perfume on the gentle breath of spring that bids it blow, and the little insect sports and rejoices and shines in the sunbeam that calls it into existence, but what shall I render unto thee, O thou Sun of my soul? Truly to give thee that which is mine is impossible, and even were it not so, it would be a gift utterly unworthy of thine acceptance. Therefore, O Lord, I give thee of thine own. I give thee the heart which thy grace hath purified from the love of sin, and made thankful. I yield unto thee my soul and body's powers; all I am and all I have, for they are thine, O Lord, yea, more thine than mine."

On the important subject of original sin Wessel's opinions were in unison with those of the Bible and of the reformers of the following century. In his scheme of Christianity man

had altogether fallen from his original righteousness through Adam's transgression. In one passage, after dilating on the helplessness and misery of man, and showing the inferiority of his unaided and untutored animal powers, even to those of the very beasts that perish, he goes on to ascribe all sorrow to sin, and all sin to the absence of the love of God in the heart. In many other parts of his works the same doctrine of human depravity is clearly and forcibly expressed.

On God's plan for man's redemption from this deplorable state, Wessel is also in harmony with the reformers, and all those who at all times have sought instruction upon this point from the word of God alone. He says : " Christ the Son of God hath taken our nature upon him, and died for our redemption, and it is through faith in a crucified Saviour that man can hope for the pardon of his sin, and it is through the Holy Spirit of God showing Christ to the heart, and working faith in the heart, and through that alone, that makes him a partaker of the benefits of his redemption. This work is altogether of God ; he works in the sinful heart of man to will and to do of his good pleasure." We return to the narra-

tive of his life, but only for the purpose of bringing it to a conclusion. He persevered to the end in the cause of holy usefulness already described. He attained to a good old age, notwithstanding the weakness of his constitution, and probably through temperance and moderation was enabled to pursue his studies and his labours in the education of youth to the last.

At the commencement of Wessel's last illness, he complained to a friend that his mind was harassed with many anxieties and doubts regarding the state of his soul, for that he was grievously tempted to deny the truth of Christianity. This is conformable with the experience of many of God's people under such circumstances. To a mind constituted like his, powerful, active, and searching, scepticism would be naturally a temptation. He had long doubted much of which all around him believed, and now the enemy of his soul took advantage of weakness, and made use of this his mental habit to attack the very citadel of the faith. But Wessel became strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. He lifted the shield of faith to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one ; he wielded the sword of the Spirit,

which is the word of God, and the devil thus resisted soon fled from him. When his friend next visited him, his countenance, though already convulsed with the tremors which indicate the approach of death, was radiant with joy, and he said with a calm, clear voice, "I thank God these wicked thoughts have all vanished, and I know nothing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." These were his last words. He died on the 4th of October, 1489, at the age of sixty-nine or seventy.

He was buried with all ecclesiastical honours, in the choir of the convent church at Gröningen, near the high altar. He was described in the annals of that church, and in those of his country, as an excellent teacher of theology, learned in the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew tongues, well travelled, and familiar with all philosophy. But his eulogists knew not the one point that enrolled the name of Wessel in the annals of Europe. He was in God's hands a peculiar and chosen instrument to prepare the way for Luther and the reformation.

At this era, be it remarked, the Netherlands was one of the most flourishing countries of Europe. Its people were industrious and enlightened, in consequence of their varied rela-



tions with different parts of the world ; they were full of courage, and enthusiastic in the cause of their liberties and privileges. The more southern part, overflowing with wealth from the perfection of its manufactures, gave way. But the northern provinces, resolved to lose everything rather than the gospel of our Lord and Saviour, not only preserved their faith, but achieved their national independence.

Meanwhile Poland seemed well prepared for reform. The Bohemian Christians had disposed it instrumentally to receive a new and mighty impulse. So early as 1500, the nobility of Great Poland had demanded that the cup should be given to the laity, by appealing to the practice of the primitive church. It became a safe asylum for those driven by persecution from their own country. They bore with them "the truth as it is in Jesus," and gladly was it embraced by many of the people among whom they sought refuge. But the time had now arrived for events of transcendent importance, the ultimate effects of which no human mind can calculate.

## CHAPTER VII.

Luther discovers a Bible—His visit to Rome—State of the priests and people of that city—The duke George of Saxony and his sons—Luther's journey to Heidelberg—Tetzel's sale of indulgences—Luther opposes him—The diet of Worms—Luther proceeds thither—His fidelity to the truth—His arrest and imprisonment at Wartburg.

LUTHER was twenty years of age, and a student at the University of Erfurt, when he discovered in its library a copy of the Bible, which he had never before beheld, and the eager perusal of which cast the first rays of pure and inspired truth on his mind.

Various circumstances were rendered subservient to the increase of the light thus received, and when lecturing at the University of Wittemberg, to which he had been appointed, he began his course by explaining the Psalmist, and thence passed on to expound the Epistle to the Romans. A new power now accompanied his devout and constant perusal of the inspired records. On one occasion having reached the

17th verse of the 1st chapter, he was exceedingly struck by the passage, "The just shall live by faith." Here was the germ of his future career—the first step of his devoted labours; often, in after years, did he imagine he heard the words repeated, "The just shall live by faith."

The new method he now adopted of expounding the Scriptures attracted a crowd of youthful students to the university. Even many professors attended, and among them Mellerstadt, the first rector of the university, who was frequently styled "The light of the world." "This monk," said he, "will put all the doctors to shame; he will bring in a new doctrine, and reform the whole church; for he builds on the word of Christ, and no one in the world can resist or overthrow that word, even should he attack it with all the arms of philosophy."

Another important event in Luther's career was his visit to Rome. Much superstition still darkened his mind. It was manifest in his saying to himself, "Oh, how I regret that my father and mother are still alive! What pleasure I should have in delivering them from the fire of purgatory by my masses, my

prayers, and by so many other admirable works !”

But what a painful discovery did he make of the state of the priesthood ! They laughed at his simplicity as he celebrated mass with reverence of spirit, and did not conceal their profaneness and even gross infidelity. While officiating one day, he found that the priests at an adjoining altar had repeated seven masses before he had finished one. “Quick ! quick !” cried one of them, “send our lady back to her Son !” At another time, when he had only reached the Gospel, the priest at his side had finished the mass, and cried, “Make haste ! have done with it at once !” The impression was then made, to which he gave utterance many years after, “The nearer we approach to Rome, the greater number of bad Christians we meet with.”

A similar remark was made by Machiavel, one of the most celebrated and profound geniuses of Italy, who lived at Florence when Luther passed through it, on his way to Rome. Alluding to the papal system, he said, “The greatest symptom of the approaching ruin of Christianity is, that the more people approach to its capital, the less they find of the Chris-

tian spirit. The scandalous examples and the crimes of the court of Rome are the cause of Italy losing all principles of piety, and all religious feeling. We Italians owe it principally to the church and the priests that we have become unbelieving reprobates." \*

On the 18th of October, 1512, Luther was admitted as a licentiate in divinity, and took the following oath: "I swear to defend the evangelical doctrine with all my might." The following day there was solemnly delivered to him, in the presence of a numerous assembly, the insignia of a doctor in theology. He was thus called on to consecrate himself to the study of the Scriptures. He then made a vow, as he himself tells us, to his beloved Holy Scripture; he promised to preach it faithfully, to teach it purely, to study it all his life, and to defend it by his arguments and writings against all false doctors, so long as God should lend him his aid. This solemn oath was Luther's calling as a reformer. Impressing on his conscience the sacred obligation to inquire freely into Christian truth, and to declare it boldly, this oath raised him above the narrow limits within which he

\* Dissert. on the 1st Dec. of Livy.

would probably have been confined by his monastic vow. It is hardly possible in the present day to conceive the effect of admitting the simple principle, yet overlooked for ages, of the sole infallible authority of the word of God. It was the first and fundamental truth from which the reformation arose.

A new authority now attended his preaching. All who loved the truth became inclined to the reformer. Of Luther, a contemporary thus spoke: "Martin is of middle stature; from constant study he is so thin in person that his bones may almost be counted; in the prime of life, and with a clear and sonorous voice. But his learning and acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures are incomparable, by which he seems to grasp the whole in his mind. Greek and Hebrew he understands thoroughly, so that he can judge respecting the interpretation. He exhibits no paucity of manner, shows a great fecundity in the topics of discourse, and an ample flow of words. Some want of judiciousness may, perhaps, be perceived, in bringing the very points of the argument to bear upon his opponent. In society he is friendly and polite, and devoid of stoical pride, and in one word popular in his

address. He is cheerful in conversation, and never loses the cheerful expression of his countenance, however severely he may be assaulted, so that one cannot resist the impression, that he has not commenced his arduous task without the assistance of God."

To Luther's ability as an expositor Melancthon bears the following testimony : " He so explained the Scriptures, that, in the judgment of all pious and enlightened men, it was as if a new light had arisen on the doctrine after a long and dark night. He pointed out the difference between the law and the gospel. He refuted that error, then predominant in the church and the schools, that men by their own works obtain remission of sins, and are made righteous before God by an external discipline. He thus brought back the hearts of men to the Son of God."\*

In 1517, Luther entered into communication with duke George of Saxony. His house had, at that time, two princes, Ernest and Albert. The elector Frederick, son of Ernest, was at this period the head of one branch—the Ernestine ; and his cousin, duke George, the head of the other—the Albertine. Dresden

\* Melancth. Vita Luth.

and Leipsic were both situated in the states of this duke, whose residence was in the former of these cities. His mother was daughter of George Podiebrad, king of Bohemia. The long struggle maintained between that country and Rome, since the time of John Huss, had not been without influence on the prince of Saxony, and he had often manifested a desire for a reformation. The priests said, "He has imbibed it with his mother's milk ; he is by birth an enemy of the clergy." In many ways he annoyed the bishops, canons, and monks ; and his cousin, the elector Frederick, was compelled more than once to interfere in their behalf. It appeared as if duke George would be one of the warmest partisans of a reformation.

It seemed, on the other hand, that Frederick would be found the most ardent champion of Rome. But the reverse actually occurred. The duke would have been delighted to humble the bishops, whose splendid retinue far surpassed his own ; but it was another thing to receive the humiliating truths of the gospel, which would lead to the conviction of his personal sinfulness, and that he could be saved by grace alone. But when he saw another appear as a reformer, and that a simple



monk, who gained numerous adherents, he became a violent adversary of the reform which he had previously appeared to favour.

In July, 1517, as he wished for an eloquent and learned preacher, Luther was recommended, and he was consequently invited to preach at Dresden, in the castle chapel, on the feast of St. James the elder. That sermon produced a varied and powerful effect. To some it proved a stumbling-block; others received the truth, and even the duke probably owed to it some advantage: he opposed the reformation during his life, but in death declared that his only hope was in the merits of Jesus Christ.

As the order of Augustine monks was about to hold its first general chapter at Heidelberg, Luther was invited as one of its most distinguished members. His friends feared that enmity had rendered his name odious in every place through which he had to pass, but considering that it was a call of duty, he calmly set out on foot a journey of more than two hundred miles.

A guide accompanied him part of the way, carrying his little baggage. At length he reached Wurzburg, where he dismissed his

attendant, and proceeded in a carriage for two or three days, when he reached the little village of Neunheim, situated amidst almond trees and clustering vines, opposite the city of Heidelberg, at the foot of what is called the "Holy Mountain," and watered by the brightly flowing Neckar. Not far from the hotel of the Rose, where an enchanting prospect is enjoyed of river, city, hill, and valley, on the road leading to Frankfort on the Maine, there still stands an old house, in which it is said he sought refuge for the night, unwilling probably to bring any of his friends in Heidelberg into difficulty or danger on his account. Here he would doubtless admire the plains of Saxony, the position of Heidelberg, placed at the junction of the two beautiful valleys of the Rhine and the Neckar. From thence he could even discover, far in the north-west, the towers of Worms, where he was hereafter to stand forth valiantly for the truth, in the midst of its enemies.

Contrary to his expectations, he was received with great cordiality by the grand chamberlain of the palatinate, who treated him most hospitably, and showed him all that was worthy of attention in the palace. But Luther felt that he had a great work to do, and that in a uni-

versity which exercised immense influence over the west and south of Germany, it was desirable he should strike a blow which would tell throughout these regions.

He therefore set about writing theses, which were attacked by five doctors ; but his replies, full of the word of God, excited great admiration. It was not long before the youngest of his opponents was left alone in the field ; but terrified by the bold propositions of the Saxon reformer, he exclaimed, " If our peasants heard such things, they would stone you to death." This assertion was received, however, with a general burst of laughter from the audience, which showed that there was " a new lever " at work, and that unspeakably great is the power of truth.

It was from this controversy that the celebrated Martin Bucer was brought to the knowledge of the gospel. At that time chaplain to the elector palatine, his eloquent delivery, his pleasing manners, and the freedom with which he censured the prevailing vices, made him a distinguished preacher. No one hastened more eagerly than he to the hall of the convent, where the controversy was conducted, taking with him pens, ink, and paper, that he might

accurately note what Luther advanced. But while he was copying the reformer's words, the Holy Spirit was inscribing the great truths of Christianity, in indelible characters, on "the fleshly tables of his heart," and by his means the gospel was sounded forth. Bucer, with two others, Brentz and Snepf, became shining lights in prominent places, and took part in many of the debates to which the reformation gave rise. Strasburg, and subsequently even England, owed a purer knowledge of the truth to the labours of Bucer.

The people of Germany were soon after in a state of great excitement. A monk, named Tetzal, went from place to place, with a splendid retinue, selling indulgences, which he declared to be "the most precious and noble of God's gifts." Pointing from his pulpit to a red cross that was reared, he profanely declared that it had as much efficacy as the very cross of Christ. "Come," he said, "and I will give you letters, all properly sealed, by which even the sins you intend to commit may be pardoned. There is no sin so great, that an indulgence cannot remit it; and even if any one (which is doubtless impossible) had offered violence to the blessed virgin Mary, mother of God, let

him pay—only let him pay well, and all will be forgiven him.” Crowds gathered about this impious pretender ; men, women, and children, and even the poor who lived on alms—all found money.

In the course of his journeys he came to Wittemberg, and Luther immediately attacked Tetzel and his doctrines. A controversy arose between them ; but as the enormous evil still continued, Luther proceeded to a more determined act. On the evening of the feast of All Saints, when multitudes were flocking to the church to do homage to the relics there exposed to view, he boldly placed on the doors of the chapel and castle of Wittemberg ninety-five propositions, in which he denounced the doctrine of indulgences. Within a month they were announced throughout Christendom. Written in Latin, they were quickly translated into German, Dutch, and Spanish, and were borne for sale even as far as Jerusalem.

It should not be concealed that there was still much darkness in the mind of Luther. He said, “I permit the publication of my propositions against indulgences for this reason, that the greatness of the success may be attributed to God, and that I may not be exalted in

mine own eyes. For, by these propositions, it will appear how weak and contemptible I was, and in how fluctuating a state of mind, when I began this business. I found myself in it alone, and, as it were, taken by surprise. And when it became impossible for me to retreat, I made many concessions to the pope ; not, however, in many important points ; but, certainly, at that time I adored him in earnest."

Again, he remarked : " When I began the affair of indulgences I was a monk, and a most mad papist. So intoxicated was I, and drenched in papal dogmas, that I should have been most ready at all times to murder, or assist others in murdering, any persons who should have uttered a syllable against the duty of obedience to the pope. I was a complete Saul, and there are many such yet. . . . I was always a sincere believer ; I was always earnest in defending the doctrines I professed ; I went seriously to work, as one who had a horrible dread of the day of judgment, and who, from his inmost soul, was anxious for salvation. In the year 1517, when I was a young preacher, and dissuaded the people from purchasing indulgences, telling them they might employ their time much better than in listening to the greedy

proclamation of a scandalous article of sale, I felt I should have the pope on my side, for he himself, in his public decrees, had condemned the excesses of his agents in that business. My next step was to complain to my own ordinary, and also to the archbishop of Mentz; but I knew not at that time that half the money went to that prelate, and the other half to the pope. The remonstrances of a low, mean, poor brother in Christ, had no weight. Thus despised, I published a brief account of the dispute, along with a sermon, in the German language, on the subject of indulgences; and very soon after I published also explanations of my sentiments, in which, for the honour of the pope, I contended that the indulgences were not entirely to be condemned, but that real works of charity were of far more consequence. This was to set the world on fire, and disturb the whole order of the universe. At once, and against me single, the whole popedom arose."

On January 6th, 1521, a splendid assembly was held at Worms, a city of Germany, on the west bank of the Rhine; then a place of importance, but now much decayed, and surrounded by dismantled and ruined walls. This gathering took place in consequence of the plague

prevailing at Nuremberg. The pope's nuncio, Aleander, implored the diet, urging many false charges, accompanied by much foul abuse, to take determined measures against Luther. "Oh!" said he, turning to Charles, "I beseech your imperial majesty not to do that which could only reflect dishonour upon your name. Discharge the duty which properly devolves upon you. Let Luther's doctrines be proscribed by your authority throughout the empire; let his writings be everywhere committed to the flames. Shrink not from the path of justice. There is enough in the errors of Luther to warrant the burning of a hundred thousand heretics. If the axe be not laid to the root of this venomous plant—if the death-blow be not dealt against it—then I behold it covering Christ's heritage with its branches, changing the vineyard of the Lord into a howling wilderness, converting God's kingdom into a haunt of wild beasts, and plunging Germany into the same wretched condition of barbarism and desolation to which Asia has been reduced by the superstition of Mohammed."

A strong sensation was made by an oration which lasted for three hours. But in a few days it had passed away. For the sacrifice of



Luther the majority of the princes were ready, but for the suppression of existing grievances they were not prepared. What these were is manifest from the address of duke George of Saxony. "The diet," said he, "must not lose sight of the grievances for which it has to claim redress from the court of Rome. How numerous are the abuses that have crept into our dominions ! The annates, which the emperor granted of his free will for the good of religion, are now exacted as a due ; the Roman courtiers daily invent new regulations to favour the monopoly, by the sale, the leasing out of ecclesiastical benefices ; a scandalous toleration is granted to rich offenders, while the poor are severely punished ; the popes are continually bestowing reversions and rent-charges on the officers of their palace, to the prejudice of those to whom the benefices rightly belong ; the abbeyes and convents of Rome are given *in commendam* to cardinals, bishops, and prelates, who apply their revenues to their own use, so that in many convents, where there ought to be twenty or thirty monks, not one is to be found ; stations are multiplied to excess ; shops for indulgences are opened in every street and square of our cities, to meet all this outlay of money, squeez-

ing and draining the last coin out of the poor man's purse ; indulgences, which ought to be granted only with a view to the salvation of souls, are sold for a price ; the officials of the bishops oppress men of low degree, but never rebuke ecclesiastics who are guilty of crimes—these are but a few of the abuses which cry out on Rome for redress. All shame is laid aside, and one object alone incessantly pursued—money ! evermore money !—so that the very men whose duty it is to disseminate the truth are engaged in nothing but the propagation of falsehood, and yet they are not merely tolerated but rewarded, because the more they lie, the larger are their gains. This is the foul source from which so many corrupted streams flow out on every side. Profligacy and avarice go hand in hand. Oh ! it is the scandal occasioned by the clergy that plunges so many poor souls into everlasting perdition. A thorough reform must be effected. To accomplish that reform a general council must be assembled. Wherefore, most excellent princes and lords, I respectfully beseech you to give this matter your immediate attention.” Duke George then presented a written catalogue of the grievances he had enumerated.

Much of the effect produced by this address was owing to the notorious opposition of the duke to Luther. Other grievances were now urged. A list of them was presented to the emperor, who was thus addressed by the deputation who presented it: "What a loss of Christian souls, what injustice, what extortion, are the daily fruits of those scandalous pretences to which the spiritual head of Christendom affords his countenance! The ruin and dishonour of our nation must be averted. We, therefore, very humbly, but very urgently, beseech you to sanction a general reformation, to undertake the work, and to carry it through."

The assembly now demanded the appearance of Luther. Spalatin, obeying the order of the elector, sent him a note of the articles which he would be called upon to retract. "Never fear," was his reply, "that I will retract a single syllable, since the only argument they have to urge against me is, that my writings are at variance with the observances of what they call the church. If our emperor Charles sends for me only to retract, my answer will be, that I will remain here, and it will be all the same as though I had been at Worms, and returned again. But if the emperor chooses then to

send for me to put me to death, as an enemy to the empire, I shall be ready to obey his summons : for, by Christ's help, I will never abandon his word in the hour of battle. I know that these bloodthirsty men will never rest till they have taken my life. God grant that my death may be laid to the charge of the papists alone !”

He was now cited to Worms, and a safe-conduct was granted him by the emperor, the elector of Saxony, duke George, and the landgrave of Hesse, through whose territories he had to pass. While these things were occurring, the pope, who on the Thursday before Easter anathematizes all heretics, poured forth his curses on Luther. On hearing it, the reformer published his maledictions, with some pungent remarks, of which the following is a specimen :—

THE POPE.—“ Leo, bishop.”

LUTHER.—“ Bishop ! as much as a wolf is a shepherd ! for the bishop's duty is to give godly exhortations, not to vomit forth imprecations and curses.”

THE POPE.—“ Servant of all the servants of God . . . .”

LUTHER.—“ In the evening, when we are

drunk ; but next morning we call ourselves Leo, lord of all lords."

THE POPE.—"The bishops of Rome, our predecessors, have been wont on this festival to employ the arms of justice . . . ."

LUTHER.—"Which, according to your account, are excommunication and anathema ; but, according to St. Paul, long-suffering, kindness, love unfeigned." (2 Cor. vi. 6, 7.)

THE POPE.—"According to the duty of the apostolic charge, and to maintain the purity of the Christian faith . . . ."

LUTHER.—"That is to say, the temporal possessions of the pope."

THE POPE.—"And the unity thereof, which consists in the union of the members with Christ their head, . . . and with his vicar . . . ."

LUTHER.—"For Christ is not sufficient : we have another besides."

THE POPE.—"To preserve the holy communion of the faithful, we follow the ancient rule, and accordingly do excommunicate and curse, in the name of God Almighty, the Father . . ."

LUTHER.—"Of whom it is said, 'God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world.'" (John iii. 17.)

THE POPE.—"The Son and the Holy Ghost,

—and by the authority of the apostles, Peter and Paul, . . . . and by our own . . . .”

LUTHER.—“OUR OWN, says the ravenous wolf, as though God’s might were too weak without him !”

The POPE.—“We curse all heretics :—the Garasi, the Patarini, ‘the poor men’ of Lyons, the Arnoldists, the Speronists, the Passageni, the Wycliffites, the Hussites, the Fratricelli . . . .”

LUTHER.—“Because they have sought to possess themselves of the Holy Scriptures, and admonish the pope to be modest, and preach the word of God.”

The POPE.—“And Martin Luther, recently condemned by us for a like heresy, together with all his adherents, and all persons, who-soever they may be, who aid or abet him.”

LUTHER.—“I thank thee, most gracious pontiff, that thou hast proclaimed me in company with all these Christians. It is an honour for me to have had my name proclaimed at Rome at the time of the festival, in so glorious a manner, and to have it circulated throughout the world with the names of all those humble confessors of Christ.”

The POPE.—“In like manner, we excommunicate and curse all pirates and corsairs . . . .”

LUTHER.—“And who is the greatest of all pirates and corsairs, if it be not he who takes souls captive, and binds them in chains, and delivers them to death?”

The POPE.—“ . . . especially such as infest our seas . . . .”

LUTHER.—“Our seas! St. Peter *our* predecessor said, ‘Silver and gold have I none.’ (Acts iii. 6.) Jesus Christ said, ‘The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; but ye shall not be so.’ (Luke xxii. 25, 26.) But if a wagon laden with hay must give way to a drunken man, how much more fitting is it that Peter and Christ himself should give way to the pope!”

The POPE.—“In like manner we excommunicate and curse all those who falsify our bulls and letters apostolical . . . .”

LUTHER.—“But God’s letters—God’s Holy Scriptures—any one may condemn and burn them!”

The POPE.—“In like manner we excommunicate and curse all those who intercept any provisions on their passage to our city of Rome . . . .”

LUTHER.—“He snarls and bites like a dog that is battling for his bone.”

The POPE.—“In like manner we condemn, and we curse, all those who withhold any privileges, dues, tithes, or revenues belonging to the clergy.”

LUTHER.—“Forasmuch as Christ hath said, ‘If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also,’ (Matt. v. 40); and ye have now heard our commentary thereon . . . .”

The POPE.—“Whatever be their station, dignity, order, authority, or rank, be they even bishops or kings.”

LUTHER.—“For there shall be false teachers among you, who shall ‘despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities,’ saith the Scripture.” (Jude 8.)

The POPE.—“In like manner we condemn and curse all who in any manner whatsoever shall molest the city of Rome, the kingdom of Sicily, the islands of Sardinia and Corsica, the patrimony of St. Peter in Tuscany, the duchy of Spoleto, the marquisate of Ancona, the Campagna, the cities of Ferrara and Benevento, or any other city or territory belonging to the church of Rome.”

LUTHER.—“O Peter, thou poor fisherman! how hast thou become master of Rome, and so



many kingdoms beside? I bid thee, All hail, Peter, king of Sicily! . . . and fisherman of Bethsaida."

THE POPE.—"We excommunicate and curse all chancellors, counsellors, parliaments, procurators, governors, officials, bishops, and others, who shall resist any of our letters admonitory, permissive, prohibitory, mediatory, or executive."

LUTHER.—"For the holy see seeks only to live in idleness, pomp, and debauchery—to rule and intimidate—to lie and deceive—to dishonour and seduce, and commit all kinds of evil in peace and security . . . ." "O Lord, arise! it is not so with us as the papists pretend; thou hast not forsaken us, neither are thine eyes turned away from us."

On the arrival of the emperor's summons, the friends of Luther were appalled, but he preserved his composure. Observing their distress, he said, "The papists have little desire to see me at Worms; but they long for my condemnation and death! No matter. Pray, not for me, but for the word of God. My blood will scarcely be cold before thousands and tens of thousands in every land will be made to answer for the shedding of it. The 'most holy' adversary of Christ, the father and

master and chief of manslaughter, is resolved that it shall be spilt. Amen ! 'The will of God be done ! Christ will give me his Spirit to overcome these ministers of Satan. I despise them while I live ; I will triumph over them in death. They are striving hard at Worms to force me to recant. My recantation shall be this : I said before that the pope was Christ's vicar ; now I say that he is the adversary of the Lord, and the apostle of the devil."

Proceeding on his way in a plain carriage, provided for him by the town council of Wittenberg, and sometimes availing himself of a stoppage to preach the gospel, he was received everywhere by crowds of people. His progress resembled a triumph. One day, when he had entered into an inn, and the crowd was as usual pressing about him, an officer made his way through, and thus addressed him : "Are you the man who has taken in hand to reform the papacy ? . . . . How can you expect to succeed ?" "Yes," answered Luther, "I am the man. I place my dependence on that almighty God whose word and commandment is before me." The officer, deeply affected, gazed on him with a mild expression, and said, "Dear friend, there is much in what you say ; I am a servant

of Charles, but your Master is greater than mine. He will help and protect you."

On every opportunity he encouraged the young to study the Scriptures, and edified those of riper years. With great fervour of spirit he thus addressed the people: "You do not bend the knee before riches and honour, but you give them your heart, the noblest part of your nature. Alas! with your *bodies* you worship God, and with your *spirits* the creature.

"This idolatry pervades every man until he is freely recovered by the faith that is in Jesus Christ.

"And how is this recovery brought about?

"In this way: Faith in Christ strips you of all confidence in your own wisdom, and righteousness, and strength; it teaches you, that if Christ had not died for you, and saved you by his death, neither you nor any created power could have done so. Then you begin to despise all these things which you see to be unavailing.

"Nothing remains but Jesus—Jesus only; Jesus, abundantly sufficient for your soul. Hoping nothing from all created things, you have no dependence save on Christ, from whom you look for all, and whom you love above all.

“But Jesus is the one sole and true God. When you have him for your God, you have no other gods.”

Just as he was approaching the city, a servant met him, and delivered him a message from Spalatin : “Abstain from entering Worms.” Luther, still unshaken, turned his eyes on the messenger, and answered, “Go, tell your master, that though there should be as many devils at Worms as there are tiles on its house-tops, I would enter it.” On the morning of the 16th April, the city was within sight; some young nobles, with six mounted cavaliers, and other gentlemen of the prince’s retinue, a hundred in number, rode out to meet him, and surrounding his carriage escorted him to the gates. At the same time, the populace were in motion, and two thousand persons accompanied him through the streets.

On the 17th of April, he was summoned before the assembly of the diet, for which he prepared himself with the following prayer : “Almighty God, how strange and inconsistent is this world ! How do the people rage and clamour ! how small and mean is man’s confidence in God ! how weak and frail is the flesh, and how powerful and busy is the devil,

by means of his apostles and worldly-wise ones ! How soon does the world withdraw its hand, and run headlong the broad and common road to hell, which is the sinner's own place, regarding nothing but what is gorgeous and powerful, mighty and of great account ! If I should turn my eyes on it, it were all over with me—the die were already cast, and the judgment pronounced. But ah ! God, my God, do thou stand by me against all this world's wisdom and philosophy ! Do thou it, for thou alone canst ! And, indeed, it is not my cause, but thine ! In respect to myself I have nothing to do to the potentates of the earth, and would willingly have good and quiet days, and be left in peace. But thine, O Lord, is this righteous and everlasting cause. Stand by me, O thou faithful, eternal God ! I put not my trust in men. It is useless and vain, for all flesh is but a broken reed. O God ! O God ! hearest thou not, O my God ? Art thou dead ? No ! Thou canst not die ! Thou but hidest thyself. Hast thou not chosen me to this, as I feel and know, for never in my life did I think to stand against such mighty men, neither have I planned it ? well then, my God, help

me in the name of thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, who shall be my shield and defence, yea, my strong tower, through the power and the might of thy Holy Spirit! Lord, where tarriest thou? My God, where art thou? Come! come! I am ready to yield my life as a lamb to the slaughter. For the cause is righteous; it is thine also, and so I will not separate myself from thee to all eternity. So be it then in thy name. The world may well leave my conscience free; yet were it full of devils, and should my body, which is thy handiwork, be destroyed and hewn in pieces, still if thy word is with me, they can only kill the body; the soul is thine, and will return to thee, to abide with thee for ever. Amen! may God help me! Amen!"

Accompanied by the marshal of the empire and the imperial herald, he proceeded to the hall, but so great was the concourse of the people that they were compelled to avoid the usual way of approach, and to go thither through gardens and houses. Curiosity induced many to seek a glimpse of him, and some even ascended the roofs to gratify their desire. Not a few addressed him in the council-chamber with words of encouragement and

comfort, and in reliance on God he advanced to his trial. On being asked if he acknowledged a heap of writings, the titles of which were mentioned, he replied in the affirmative. In answer to the second inquiry, if he recanted, he replied, "As this is a question of faith, and the salvation of the soul, and concerns the word of God, which is the greatest treasure in heaven or on earth, and deserving of our highest reverence, it would be presumptuous and dangerous for me to declare anything unadvisedly, because I might easily, through indifference, assert as certain more than the case warrants, or less than it demands, either of which would draw on me the condemnation of Christ, when he says, 'Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.' Therefore I beseech your imperial majesty, with all due submission and humility, to grant me time for reflection, that I may, without disparagement to God's word, or detriment to my own soul, rightly answer the questions laid before me." This request was met by the reproving remark, that he had had already sufficient time for reflection, yet the emperor granted him one day for consideration ; and Luther being dismissed,

the assembly broke up. He was accompanied home amidst the plaudits of the multitude.

On the following day, after various statements, he called upon all and every one present to convict him of error from the prophetic or gospel Scriptures, avowing, if converted, his readiness to recant, and to cast his books into the fire. "From all which I think it will be plain," said he, "that I have sufficiently pondered, considered, and weighed the danger of the apprehended disunion, sedition, and revolt, arising to the world from my doctrine, of which I was yesterday so seriously and confidently reminded. In truth, it rejoices me to see divisions, discord, and variance, on account of the Divine word, for such is the course and issue it must have, as the Lord himself says, 'I am not come to bring peace, but a sword.'" He next warned them against the mischief which an inconsiderate or ungodly conduct in this affair might produce; adding, "I say not, therefore, that my doctrine and instruction were needful for such great personages, but that I neither could nor would withdraw my service from my German fatherland; and herewith commending myself most submissively to your imperial majesty and lordships,



I humbly beseech that you will not suffer the bad opinion of my ill-wishers to calumniate me, and bring me into disgrace."

At the conclusion of his speech, he was required to repeat in Latin what he had uttered in his own language; and though overcome with fatigue, he addressed the assembly with great vigour, and in a firm tone. His reply excited the greatest astonishment; even the emperor said, "The monk spake with an intrepid heart and unshaken courage." Luther was now reminded by the chancellor of Treves, that if he did not retract, he must be dealt with as an obstinate heretic; to which he replied, "May God be my helper, for I can retract nothing!" Thus he pronounced his Amen to the doctrines he had proclaimed. Various means were now employed to shake the mind of Luther, but his resolution was undaunted; he declared that he would rather lose his life than give up the word of God. He now received the order of the emperor to quit Worms immediately, with the grant of twenty-one days to return, if he neither preached nor wrote during his journey to disturb the public peace.

"It was," he says, "a beautiful day when we departed from Worms. Firmly convinced

of the truth of the opinions we had maintained, I felt no uneasiness—no fear. I knew that God, whose servant I am, would protect me from my enemies, while my friends who remained faithfully attached to me sang hymns of joy for our victory over the pope and his supporters. External nature seemed to invite us to happiness, and, by her sweet smiles, to promise us deliverance. The fields looked green, the trees were covered with verdure, the sun shone brilliantly in the firmament, and the birds would perch on the branches, and delight us with their warblings. One or two would commence singing, and then they would all at once, both old and young, join in full chorus, and so long that it is marvellous how voice and breath can endure it. I wonder whether the pope and his cardinals at Rome would produce such noble and gallant attendants.”

After Luther's departure from Worms, fierce contentions prevailed in the diet, but ultimately the policy of Rome became ascendant. The edict now issued proscribed Luther and his adherents, condemned that they should be delivered up to the authorities, and proclaimed relentless hostility against the object for which he laboured. At the same time, it was obvious, that to enforce

it would produce a civil war in Germany, but even from this there was no shrinking. At the close of the diet, Aleander thus addressed his colleague : " Well, Caraccioli ! if we have effected nothing very splendid at this diet, yet it is certain that by this edict we have turned the whole country into one great slaughter-house, in which the Germans, raging against their own entrails, will be speedily suffocated in their own blood !"

After visiting his relations, Luther proceeded on his journey, in company with two of those who had accompanied him to Worms, and while pursuing it he was seized by masked horsemen, and placed on another horse. Off went the horsemen, riding first in one direction and then in another, and having had the shoes on the horses' feet reversed, they were, at length, sure that they had defied pursuit. Unaccustomed to riding, Luther was almost overcome with fatigue. The escort allowed him to have some water at a well, to which his name has since been given, and then, as the shades of evening closed, they proceeded with greater speed. About midnight, they arrived at the castle of Wartburg, near to Eisenach, and to it the reformer was committed as a prisoner.

Information of his sudden and mysterious disappearance flashed like lightning through Germany ; multitudes appeared interested in his fate. His relations and friends were filled with apprehension, and, amidst a great diversity of opinions, some parties reported that assassins had taken away his life. Priests were glad at their supposed release from his influence, but the people mourned the loss of their tried friend and teacher. " Never again shall we behold him," was their sorrowful declaration ; " never again shall we hear that bold man, whose voice stirred the depths of our hearts."

Worms was meanwhile the scene of extraordinary excitement. Remonstrances, loud and deep, were heard on all sides, from rich and poor ; the noble and the cottager grieved over his loss, and determined to do their best to discover his fate. Suspicion rested on Charles v., and the nuncios did not escape loud accusations. Luther's devotedness to the cause he upheld, and his firmness in the hour of severe trial, had produced the conviction, now rapidly extending, that he was no impostor. At Wittenberg his friends and colleagues were overcome with sadness ; they thought their skilful and undaunted leader was taken from them.

Their distress was, however, greatly relieved on hearing that he was living, though in close confinement.

The followers of Luther, having no new scenes to absorb their attention, examined more closely his past life, and particularly his conduct at Worms, where, opposed by his most determined and implacable enemies, he obtained so glorious a triumph. "Has he not," they asked, "offered to retract, if refuted?" "No one has had the hardihood to undertake to refute him: does not that show that he has spoken the truth?"

Meanwhile the knight George, as Luther was called, was living in solitude. He was permitted to go at large in the fortress, but its limits were his. Yet his wishes were complied with, and his treatment was considerate. Still his heart was sometimes sorrowful, when he exclaimed, "O my friends, do you then forget to pray for me, that God can thus leave me to myself?"

His time was well spent. "I am here," he says, "at once the idlest and busiest of mortals. I study Hebrew and Greek, and write without interruption." The multitude of tracts following in rapid succession from his pen, dis-

played all his usual vigour. Discussions took place also between Luther and his friends as to monastic establishments. He saw now more clearly that they were opposed to the doctrines of free grace ; as the monks considered virtue attaching to their mode of life, and thus laid their hopes of salvation on a foundation of human merit. Convinced that the full glory of Christ was not given him, he exclaimed, immediately as he said this, " Monkeny must yield ; the doctrine of Scripture is that of justification by faith alone."

Aware that he was a prisoner in the castle of Wartburg, his enemies considered his connexion with the reformation at an end. The purveyors of indulgences were assembled, and they were stimulated to renew their employment. " Do not fear," it was said ; " we have silenced him : go, shear the flock in peace ; the monk is in prison, under bolts and bars ; and this time he will be clever, indeed, if he disturbs us at our work." Again the churches of Halle sounded with the voice of the sellers of indulgences, and these were spread out to attract purchasers. But to their dismay he completed a tract, " Against the new Idol of Halle."

On hearing of his purpose, the elector said :

“I will not suffer Luther to write against the archbishop of Mentz, to the disturbance of the public tranquillity.” But the reformer was not to be intimidated: “Truly,” said he, “it is very fine to hear you say we ought not to disturb the public peace, when you permit the disturbance of the peace that is from God; it shall not be so.” He did, however, agree to delay the publication of his tract, and some of the severer passages were removed. A letter was, however, sent to the cardinal elector, threatening to attack the vendors of indulgences by pen, if the proceeding were not stopped. He was terrified, and fourteen days had scarcely expired, when Luther received from him a letter, assuring him that he (the elector) took the letter in good part, and was so great and pious a Christian, that he should act as became one in such a case.

Luther was attacked by violent illness, and he felt great anxiety for the cause of God. Still he sometimes called Wartburg his Patmos, at others his wilderness, and at others his region of birds.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Erasmus — Melancthon, his learning and works — Luther's return to Wittemberg — His translation of the New Testament — His various writings — Wide diffusion of the works of the reformers — Progress of the reformation.

ERASMUS, a native of Rotterdam, had long distinguished himself by scholarship. For some years he had been engaged in translating a new edition of the New Testament, and which, when completed, he presented to the almoner of Henry VII., being at that time in England. In 1516, he received an invitation to France, from Francis I. In that year, the New Testament, in Greek and Latin, with his notes, was published by him at Basle; the first entire version that was printed and published separately. His Latin translation is considered better than the Vulgate, and more conformable to the Greek text. According to Ernesti, his annotations prepared the way for all who have since excelled in interpreting the Scriptures, though from his ignorance of Hebrew he often errs.



Erasmus now attained to extraordinary eminence. He corresponded with the most learned men of all countries. His opinions were regarded with peculiar reverence. He did not escape, however, strong opposition. In the struggles which took place between the Reformed and the Romanists, in 1518, he took a lively interest. He opposed the indulgences of pope Leo x., respected Luther for his magnanimous opposition to their sale, and incurred, in consequence, the hatred of many by whom he was formerly esteemed. In 1519, Erasmus received from Melancthon a letter expressive of his approbation of the New Testament and paraphrases, and also of the good wishes of Luther.

Erasmus would not fail highly to appreciate such a tribute from Melancthon. Some years before, he had thus written: "What promise does not that youth, or boy, as we might almost term him, hold out! He is about equally eminent in his knowledge of Latin and Greek. What acuteness in argument! What purity and elegance of diction! What manifold knowledge! What delicacy and extraordinary tenderness of feeling!"

Melancthon had found, also, another and a purer source of knowledge. His relation,

Reuchlin, had given him not only a number of valuable books, but also a copy of the Bible. The Scriptures were to him the most precious treasure. With what love and delight did he expatiate over the fields of Divine truth, plucking and gathering the fruits which Divine wisdom has here caused to grow ! “ In reading the Bible,” he says, “ he was so constant, that nobody would believe the volume he always carried in his bosom was a sacred one, but rather that he was enamoured of some profane author.”

Through this steady and devout application to the sacred writings, his eyes were opened to the evils that prevailed. He heard one friar read from the pulpit a proposition of Aristotle, and another state in a sermon that the wooden shoe of the Franciscans was made of the tree of knowledge of paradise. His love for the truth and for free inquiry was much heightened by another circumstance. Reuchlin had been compelled, for his own justification, to prepare some papers, partly to be sent to the papal court, and partly to that of the emperor. Melancthon made, with his own hands, an elegant transcript of these, for the use of the author. This friendly service greatly contri-

buted to enlighten his mind as to the state of the church, and the demands of the age. Still more useful was the frequent personal intercourse which he now enjoyed with Reuchlin, who often rode from Stutgard to Tübingen, to spend several days with his young friend. Their love was like that of a father and a child. The enlightened and unprejudiced mind of the elder exerted a great and salutary influence on the susceptible heart of the younger.

When Frederick the Wise, elector of Saxony, was in search of a competent teacher of the Greek language for the University of Wittenberg, then newly founded, Reuchlin thus wrote: "Melancthon will promote the honour, reputation, and usefulness of the university; for I know no one among the Germans who surpasses him, except Erasmus, who is a Hollander. He goes beyond us all in Latin." Amply did he sustain this glowing recommendation. "As long as he lives," said Luther, "I desire no other teacher of Greek. He has excited in all theologians, the highest as well as the lowest, a zeal for the study of Greek."

With great enthusiasm he sought to supply, in a short time, his defective knowledge of Hebrew. His zeal for theological studies was

much augmented by a disputation at Leipsic, in the summer of 1519, when he became more deeply convinced than before of the contrariety of the prevailing church doctrines to Divine truth. After much effort, Luther prevailed on the elector to appoint Melancthon professor of theology. What a blessing this arrangement became, in the good providence of God, it would be difficult to describe. Students flocked to his lectures, not only from Germany, but from almost all the countries of Europe. Multitudes, attracted by the splendour of his name, repaired to him from England, France, Hungary, Transylvania, Poland, Bohemia, from Italy itself, and even from Greece.

“It was of inestimable value to Melancthon,” says Ranke, “that he could here devote himself to subjects which filled his whole soul, and that he now found the substance of those forms to which his attention had been hitherto principally directed. He embraced with enthusiasm the theological views of Luther, and, above all, his profound exposition of the doctrine of justification. But he was not formed to receive these opinions passively. He was one of those extraordinary spirits, appearing at rare intervals, who attain to a full possession and use

of their powers at an early period of life. When he went to Wittenberg, he was but just twenty-one. With the precision that solid philological studies seldom fail to impart, with the nice instinct natural to the frame of his mind, he seized the theological element which was offered to his grasp."

A still more extensive sphere of influence was opened to Melancthon, by the publication of a multitude of theological writings. Some of these were issued by Luther, who had heard their substance in the lecture-room, without the knowledge of the author. Thus, of the Expositions of the Epistles to the Romans and Corinthians, he says : "It is I who publish this commentary of yours, and I send yourself to you. If you are not satisfied with yourself, you do right ; it is enough that you please us. Yours is the fault, if there be any. Why did you not publish them yourself ? Why did you let me ask, command, and urge you to publish to no purpose ?"

Melancthon was the first who prepared a manual or system of religious doctrines. The origin of this work was entirely accidental. In his Lectures on the Epistle to the Romans, he had drawn up, for the benefit of his hearers, a sum-

mary of the most important doctrines treated of by the apostle. This little abstract was printed by some of his pupils, without his knowledge, and as soon as he perceived its defects, he determined to publish it in an enlarged and complete form. Thus originated his "*Loci Communes*," or Common Places, first printed in Wittemberg, in 1521. Wherever in Germany any desire had been awakened for the reformation of the church, this volume received a warm welcome.

Luther, especially, was full of joy: "Whoever," he exclaimed, "would now become a theologian has great advantages, for, in the first place, he has the Bible, which is now so clear that he can understand it without difficulty. Then let him read Philip's *Loci Communes*, so that he will have the whole of it by heart. When he has these two things, he is a theologian whom neither the devil nor any heretic can pull down, and the whole of theology stands open before him, so that he can peruse for edification what he will. Then, if he pleases, he may read Philip's Commentary on Romans, and may subjoin my commentaries on Galatians and Deuteronomy, and thus gain a copious stock of words. You will find none of

all his books where the sum of religion is exhibited in finer proportions than in the *Loci Communes*. Read all the fathers and sententiaries, you will find nothing to be compared with it. There is no better book after the Bible than this."

The first edition was immediately exhausted, and two more editions were demanded in the same year. In five years, the work had been printed fifteen times in Latin, and ten in German, with but few important alterations. In its revised forms, at subsequent periods, it was equally, if not still more, successful.

The publication of the work was of inestimable value to the cause of the gospel. The genius of Melancthon was admired in the courts, the universities, and the churches, while his character excited affection. Even those who did not know the author were attracted by his work; their prejudices fell to the ground; they received its truths. The rudeness and sometimes the violence of Luther's language had repulsed many, but here was a man, who, with elegance of style, and exquisite taste, set forth the great things of God.

One special charm of the works of Melanc-

thon was, their perspicuity. "It is in vain," he remarks, "to expend the utmost pains in science, if we never attain the power clearly to present the thoughts of the soul." It was this, therefore, he earnestly sought. "I love," he says, "the exact expression, and I call out aloud in the school daily, that every one should take pains to select appropriate language. I wish that none would ever follow me when I make use of terms that are not pertinent; I am a very severe judge to myself, and I commend others who employ a vigorous censorship." Thus he gained a clear, natural, and popular method of address, alike intelligible to the learned and the unlearned.

At Wittemberg, much had been effected during the absence of Luther. It was now determined that principles hitherto avowed and defended should be carried into practical operation. Accordingly, thirteen monks left the Augustinian convent, and renounced their vows; Feldkirchen, one of Luther's earliest associates, married, and several other priests followed his example. As the cup in the Lord's supper had been denied to the laity, it was now restored; the people receiving the wine as well as the bread in the celebration of



that ordinance, on Christmas day, 1521, and the German language was used instead of the Latin. These were the beginnings of an actual reformation.

Of all the efforts of Luther, the most important and useful was his translation of the Scriptures. This great work was begun during his concealment in the castle of Wartburg. The New Testament was finished shortly after his return to Wittemberg; and, having received the critical revision of his friend Melancthon, was published in September, 1522, and obtained forthwith an immense circulation.

Several other versions had been previously printed without exciting much attention, and the numbers issued had been very small. But the people of Germany were now prepared to receive and value the precious gift. Information had been widely diffused, and holy zeal awakened.

Luther and his associates had dealt heavy blows at anti-Christ, with weapons fetched from the armoury of God. Now the heavenly magazine itself was opened, and the assault became fiercer and more effective. Nothing tended so powerfully to establish and extend

the reformation as the publication of the German New Testament.

Not only were the Scriptures previously denied to the people placed in their hands, but their examination of the contents of the Bible for themselves was maintained in opposition to the claim of the Romish church to be the only authoritative interpreter. "The right," said Luther, "of inquiring and judging concerning matters of faith belongs to Christians, all and individually ; and so entirely belongs to them, that cursed be he who would curtail this right by a single hair's breadth. Christ has established it by many infallible declarations. Then not only is it their right, but their duty, to form such judgments ; and this authority easily overbalances the opinions of all the pontiffs, of all the fathers, the councils, the schools, which confine that right to the bishops and ministers, and impiously and sacrilegiously ravish it from the people, who are in the truth, the church."

Eventful were the times now passing. Against Luther the powers of this world appeared to be arrayed. The pope had excommunicated all his adherents ; the imperial diet had condemned his doctrines ; princes were labouring to suppress

them throughout the Germanic states ; the ministers of Rome were assailing them with violent invectives ; and the other states of Christendom were calling on Germany to put down an enemy, whose hostile efforts they even dreaded at a distance. But the cause of God was making progress, as if the declaration were being verified, " He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh ; the Lord shall have them (his enemies) in derision."

Among the first to burst their bonds, and to propagate the new doctrine through the churches of the west, were the monastic orders. In some instances, aged men, who had maintained the light of truth amidst prevailing and intense darkness, now entreated that God would permit them to depart in peace, since their eyes had seen his salvation. In others, young men received the doctrines of Luther with the greatest eagerness. Numerous convents of the Augustinians turned to the Saviour, and provoked by their conduct the resentment of Rome.

Others joined in the movement. In most of the cloisters, the most intelligent and pious of the monks espoused the truth, regardless of the consequences. Even the heads of convents yielded to the power that was in operation ;

some of them declaring, that if a monk felt his conscience burdened by his vows, so far from retaining him in their convents, they would take him on their shoulders to carry him out of them. Everywhere, indeed, throughout Germany, monks were seen from various causes—but the majority from the conviction that the monastic life was opposed to the will of God—leaving the cloisters in which they had purposed to spend the residue of their days; and priests in still greater numbers proclaimed the new doctrine.

In cities, towns, and even villages, Luther's works were read. Struck by their contents, some took up the Scriptures to settle their doubts, and were astonished at the difference between true Christianity and the system they maintained. It was for them to decide between that system and the truth, and they preferred the latter. At this crisis, perhaps, a preacher of the gospel arrived; it might be a priest or a monk, but he described with eloquence and effect the redemption of man through the blood of Christ, and the vanity of human works as the ground of acceptance before God. Fuel was thus added to the flame that had been kindled, and intensely did it continue to burn.

The clergy, and frequently the magistrates, put forth all their power to arrest the work of renovation, but it was that of Him who says, "I will work, and who shall let it?" Men gave in their adherence to the gospel, loving not their lives even to the death. Sometimes, incensed at long-practised delusions, they compelled the priests to withdraw ; at others, these deceivers retired, surmising that the staff of their power was broken.

In other instances, the friends of the truth became wanderers from persecution. But this proved for the furtherance of the gospel. They talked of it to those who knew it not, read to them the Scriptures, and preached in the church if they could obtain it ; if not, on a hill, in a cemetery, a market-place, or beneath the shadow of a tree. At Gosslar, a student from Wittemberg taught the new doctrine in a plain planted with lindens, whence evangelical Christians were called "The Linden Brethren."

Even simple Christians, with the New Testament in their hands, undertook to defend the truth. The Romanists were affrighted at that book ; they had been taught that it should be studied only by priests and monks. These, therefore, had now to advance, but to the de-

clarations of Scripture they knew not how to reply. "Unfortunately," says Cochläus, (we should rather say happily,) "Luther had persuaded his partisans that no credence should be given except to the oracles of the sacred books." The priest and monk, therefore, often retired discomfited in the struggle.

Singular are the fruits of zeal in extraordinary times. At Ingoldstadt, a young weaver read Luther's works to the assembled crowd, under the eye of Dr. Eck, a bitter antagonist of the reformer. In the same city, the university having sought to compel a pupil of Melancthon to retract, a woman, Argula von Staufen, undertook his defence, and challenged the doctors to dispute with her. She would have proved superior in a conflict, as "the sword of the Spirit" transcends every other weapon.

Great was the contrast between the parties now engaged in a determined struggle. One was formed of the supporters of the old system, who had neglected the cultivation of letters; the other, of those who were diligent in study, and devoted to the examination of the sacred Scriptures. When, therefore, these champions of reform encountered the doctors of Rome it was with singular advantage.

The impulse given by the reformation to popular literature in Germany was immense. The number of books, averaging between twenty and thirty, augmented with astonishing rapidity after the publication of Luther's theses. The increase in five years was from seventy-one distinct works in a year to no less than four hundred and ninety-eight. Almost all these were published at Wittemberg, and most frequently Luther was their author. The year 1522 witnessed the appearance of one hundred and thirty writings of the reformers, and the following year one hundred and eighty-three, while in the same year only twenty Romanist publications were issued. How powerful an auxiliary the press became is, therefore, at once apparent.

Nor were other means wanting. Monks, taking leave of their cloisters, and too ignorant to preach the gospel, visited provinces and hamlets, and entered solitary dwellings, to offer the works of Luther and his associates for sale. Hawkers soon covered the face of Germany. Printers and bookbinders preferred the works of the reformers to those of their antagonists, as incomparably superior in substance and style. To offer in a fair a book on the papacy,

was to be derided by merchants as well as men of letters. In vain the emperor and the princes had issued decrees against the writings of the reformers; the proscribed books were hidden, so that they might be safe in inquisitorial visits, and were read in secret with increased ardour. Nor were these things limited to Germany. Luther's writings were translated and widely diffused in England, France, Spain, and Italy.

Meanwhile, Luther and his followers went forth proclaiming "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." In one town, as there was no church capable of containing the multitude, Luther mounted the balcony of the town hall, and preached to twenty-five thousand persons, assembled before it in the open place. In other towns he was surrounded by large, eager, and interested crowds.

Five of his disciples went to Freyberg, where resided in the castle duke Henry, brother to duke George. In the previous year, his wife, a princess of Mecklenberg, had given him a son, whom he had named Maurice. As Luther's disciples preached, the duchess, who recoiled with horror from heresy, listened to their sermons, astonished to find that the still small voice of mercy had excited in her bosom



so much apprehension. Gradually the eyes of her understanding were enlightened, and she received the truth. Scarcely had duke George learned that it was proclaimed at Freyberg, when he requested his brother to prevent its continuance. Duke Henry severely and rudely reprimanded his wife, but, committing herself to God, she displayed the virtues of "a meek and quiet spirit," and these won, by degrees, on her husband's heart. Over the cradle of their child they could now affectionately unite in supplication, and from it God was pleased to bring forth one who proved a defender of the reformation.

At Frankfort on the Maine, one of the chief free cities of the empire, Ibach boldly proclaimed salvation by Jesus Christ. He was, in consequence, denounced to the archbishop, deposed by the clergy, and finally expelled. But when it appeared that Rome was triumphant, many nobles declared in favour of the gospel. Addressing the clergy, they said, "Embrace the evangelical doctrines; recall Ibach, or we will withdraw your tithes!" The people, inclined to reform, were encouraged by the conduct of the nobles. One day the priest, Peter Mayer, most opposed to the reformation,

was about to preach ; a great tumult arose. Mayer, greatly terrified, hurried out of the church. This occurrence decided the council ; they issued an order commanding all the clergy to preach God's word purely, or to quit the city.

It was not to be expected that the truth would have an uninterrupted progress ; its advancement might rather be expected to rouse the malice of its enemies. On Clement vii. succeeding to the popedom, it was evident that he thought only of maintaining its privileges, and rendering its forces subservient to the aggrandizement of its power. He now sent to Nuremberg the cardinal Campeggi, one of the ablest men of his court, and who knew almost all the princes of Germany. On entering Augsburg, he wished, as usual, to give his blessing to the people, but they only laughed at him, and he entered Nuremberg without any of the ordinary attendants of his state.

At the diet of January, 1524, he reminded those assembled of the edict of Worms, and called on them to put down the reformation by force. The only reply was, the addition of a clause that virtually annulled the edict : " It must be conformed to *as much as possible*." It was also agreed, that a secular assembly should be convened in November, to settle all religious

questions, and that the theologians of the several states should draw up a list of the questions which should then be determined. Great was the rage of the pope at the tidings ; it was resolved to decide in matters of religion against his very authority.

Clement now wrote to the emperor : " If I am the last to make head against the tempest, it is not that I am the only one threatened, but that the helm is in my hands. The rights of the empire are still more assailed than the dignity of the court of Rome." He also laboured to make himself allies in Germany, and soon succeeded in gaining over one of the most powerful houses in the country, that of the duke of Bavaria. Other accessions to his cause now took place.

A meeting of those who were thus confederated was soon convened at Ratisbon ; it was opened by the legate, who forcibly depicted the dangers which reform entailed on the princes and the clergy. " Let us," he said, " extirpate heresy, and save the church." The princes and bishops now assembled resolved to employ every means in their power for this end, and, unable, to hide from themselves the immoralities of the priests, forbade certain things to which they had been accustomed.

We sometimes observe persons imitating that which they avowedly oppose. Emser had set up a translation of the Bible in opposition to Luther's; Eck had published Common Places in opposition to Melancthon; and now some efforts were made for a partial reform. But these were only subtle expedients—a removal of a branch here and there to save the tree—concessions to prevailing feeling, that all beside might be perpetuated.

The controversy which had hitherto been religious, now assumed a political character. The Roman party formed at Ratisbon had broken up the unity of Germany. Various parties were brought into violent collision. Charles issued his declaration, "That the decree of Worms should be promptly enforced against the new Mohammed;" and persecution immediately began in the Austrian states.

Tauber, a citizen of Vienna, had written against some of the Romish errors, and had disseminated Luther's works. He was thrown into prison, but it was thought he would retract, and great preparations were made to render his so doing an imposing spectacle. But when the formula of recantation was placed in his hand, he exclaimed, "I am not convinced, and I appeal to the holy Roman empire!" Amaze-

ment seized the priests, the people, and the choir that in loud strains was to celebrate the repentance of the heretic. But Tauber called for death, rather than renounce the gospel. His head was forthwith struck off, and his body consigned to the flames. His devotedness made a deep impression on the citizens of Vienna.

The most horrid cruelties were perpetrated in other states of the Catholic league. Especially did persecution rage in the territories of the dukes of Bavaria. In vain was the gospel preached in secret; its enemies pursued it in private houses, and in the retired plains of the country. "Crosses and persecution," said Luther, "reign in Bavaria; these savage beasts give way to their utmost fury."

The persecutions thus arising from the league of Ratisbon, excited a painful reaction among the people of Germany; scarcely had the assembly separated, when the deputies of the cities whose bishops had taken part in that alliance met, and resolved that their preachers should proclaim the gospel, and the gospel alone, in accordance with the language of the apostles.

Several princes were now won over to the cause of the reformation. Philip, landgrave of Hesse, embraced the gospel, exclaiming, "Rather

would I surrender my body and life, my dominions and subjects, than the word of God." A monk wrote him a letter full of reproaches, and conjured him to remain faithful to Rome. Philip replied, "I will remain faithful to the ancient doctrine, but as it is contained in Scripture." He then proceeded to prove with great force, that man is justified only by faith. The monk was not merely silenced, but amazed. He called Philip "Melancthon's disciple."

Other princes pursued a similar course. The elector palatine refused to lend himself to any persecution; the duke of Luneberg, nephew to the elector of Saxony, began to reform his states; and the king of Denmark issued his proclamation, that in Schleswig and Holstein every one should be free to serve God as his conscience commanded him.

But we must pause in this narrative. We have seen enough, however, to form a just conception of the character and influence of Popery, to show that the word of the Lord is "more precious than gold, yea, than much fine gold," and to stimulate to its diffusion among all the children of men.







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Characters, scenes, and  
incidents of the Reforma-  
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